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A Century of Historical Study

By

CHESTER CHARLTON McCOWN

*Professor of New Testament Literature and
Director of the Palestine Institute in
The Pacific School of Religion*

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A



*To Successive Groups of Students in
Pacific School of Religion
1914-1939*

PREFACE

POLITICS, economics, religion: around these three mutually interwoven elements in the social structure revolve the greatest problems of history. If those events may be defined as historical which exercise an influence beyond the moment of their happening, then certainly Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity deserve to be reckoned, not merely the greatest fact in the history of religion, but one of the greatest in all history.¹ Surely no other single person has so deeply and so widely affected all of the structure of society as Jesus. Why and how? That is a supremely difficult question. It is not too much to claim that this question of why and how makes Jesus the great historical problem.

The thorough investigation of any problem involves three factors: (1) the facts which constitute the problem; (2) the contributions which science and scholarship have already made toward the discovery and interpretation of the facts and the analysis of the problem; and (3) the question of method and point of view in approaching the facts and their problem. In historical investigations these three are labeled the sources, the history of scholarship, and the philosophy of history. The three commandments of historical research are: (1) "Thou shalt study and criticize thy sources scientifically"; (2) "Thou shalt know the work done before and beside thee"; and (3) "Thou shalt know thy own prepossessions and organize them into an explicit philosophy of life and of history."²

¹See Victor Ehrenberg, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 143 (1930), 505 f., 508.

²I have paraphrased James Moffatt's two commandments (see his *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, New York: Scribners, 1911, p. ix) and added a third.

Recently there has been a marked revival of interest in the philosophy of history and an increase of interest in the study of the psychology of interpretation. Therefore I am doing only what has always been done in the study of the life of Jesus. Books about him, like other books, almost invariably betray the atmosphere of their writers, as painters take some one of their own kind as models for their portrayals of him. That is one thesis of this study. The attempt to illustrate the relations between the progress of research into the life of Jesus and the characteristic ideas and dominating tendencies of successive periods, even within the narrow confines of the last one hundred years, has multiplied the pages of this book. The presentation of the evidence for this thesis seemed to me more important than the enumeration of a larger number of scholars and their works, for this relation between current culture and the prevailing conceptions of Jesus is one of the indispensable elements in the explanation of the constant changes, from generation to generation, almost from decade to decade, in the accepted portraits of him.

So far as possible, I have started from concrete cases as illustrations of general tendencies, not only because this is the more interesting way to write history, but also because it keeps the writer nearer the facts and makes the progress of thought clearer to the reader. Therefore, so far as space permits, the thesis that social influences affect the course of thought has been balanced by attention to the idiosyncrasies of individual scholars.

It may seem to some that a disproportionate amount of attention has been paid to German scholarship. Possibly that is true. I should have liked to add something more in every chapter on the labours of New Testament scholars in France, Holland, England, and America, instead of introducing them only at points where some special contribution was made. But such additions would not have recorded new or different ideas

or fresh impulses to progress. In general, is it not true that England and America have retarded, rather than furthered advance? To the credit of the scholars in these two countries it can be said that they have laboured to curtail wild-cat ventures.

This study constitutes an excellent illustration of the relativity of written history. The historian consciously and unconsciously makes selections from among the available materials, and then offers interpretations of the materials selected. Three libraries in Berkeley, at the University of California, the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, and the Pacific School of Religion offer remarkably rich, but far from complete, collections of works on the Bible. With all possible good will and visits to other libraries in the United States, England, and Germany, I cannot suppose that I have handled more than a small portion of the literature that might be profitably used in a study such as this. From all that I have found selections have been made, I hope with a fair amount of good judgment. Many selections have been purely fortuitous. In many cases I have depended on the judgment of others. Such obligations can be only partially acknowledged in the appended bibliographies and footnotes.

The majority of the books and articles noted fall into three classes: those to which I owe most, those which may assist the student to follow the subject farther, and brief, succinct accounts of discussions for the reader who is pressed for time. I have usually included references on both sides of debated questions.

For permission to use copyright material I have to express my thanks to the University of Chicago Press and *The Journal of Religion* for the use of an article; and to the Macmillan Company for a quotation from B. W. Bacon's *Introduction to the New Testament* (1900).

The obligations I owe to patient librarians and their staffs

are legion, great in the three libraries mentioned above and those of the University of Chicago and the British Museum. For nearly four years in Palestine, a type of preparation which I regard as indispensable to the student of early Christianity, I have to thank the Pacific School of Religion and the American Schools of Oriental Research, the one for generous leaves of absence, the other for appointments as fellow, annual professor, and director.

My sympathy as well as my thanks goes out to successive groups of students upon whom I have experimented in the use of this material.

To Doctor William Adams Brown and Doctor Bertram Lee Woolf, the editors of this series, I am under special obligations. At Doctor Brown's suggestion, I have reduced very considerably the bulk of the original manuscript (for which the reader will doubtless be more than grateful), and his valuable criticisms have helped me clarify certain points and improve their presentation. Doctor Woolf also made most helpful suggestions and caught certain errors, for which I am duly thankful.

May, 1940.

C. C. McCOWN.

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PART I

THE SEARCH FOR THE HISTORICAL
POINT OF VIEW

SUMMARY

I. The furor aroused by Strauss's *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* illustrates the characteristics of the post-Napoleonic period and the difficulties which the attempt to apply historical criticism to the New Testament had to meet. The fatuity and bigotry of his opponents as well as the development of nineteenth-century science eventually drove Strauss to abandon Christianity as hopelessly moribund. The basis for his criticism he discovered in current mythological studies, which taught him to doubt the historical value of ancient tradition, and in Hegel's philosophy, which claimed to preserve the essential doctrines of Christianity, especially the Incarnation, without regard to the historical accuracy of the Gospels. His criticism was philosophical rather than historical. His book, like the traditions he analyzed, was essentially a product and a revelation of the confused thinking of his times, as were the reactions against it. Its value lay in its provocation to further studies.

II. The bitterness and abusiveness of the conservative attacks upon Strauss and upon other historical critics were due partly to the conservative political reaction following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era, partly to want of leadership, partly to ecclesiastical quarrels, partly to the emotionalism and anti-intellectualism of the new pietism which resulted from the revival of religion in the early nineteenth century, but largely to the uncertainties, weaknesses, and divisions within the conservative ranks. Protestant biblicism and supernaturalism had been undermined by deism and rationalism in England, France, and Germany. Belief in miracles and the fulfillment of predictive prophecy, and consequently in the divine inspiration and verbal authority of the Scriptures, had been placed in jeopardy. The development of scientific thought, the enlargement of the cultural horizon, and particularly the development of textual and philological studies after

the Renaissance had prepared for the grammatico-historical interpretation of the Bible "like any other book," as Ernesti and Semler insisted.

III. Lack of clarity as to the relation of revelation to history was one of the weaknesses of the age. Lessing, Herder, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling all agreed that miracles and the fulfillment of prophecy could not establish the truths of the biblical revelation, yet that they might assist the unintelligent to faith. None of them rejected allegorical interpretation *in toto*, and thus the scientific attitude of Ernesti and Semler failed to bear fruit. The mysticism of Schleiermacher, the greatest theologian of the period, clouded his fine critical judgment in his estimate of the fourth Gospel. The progressive thinkers of the age were not sufficiently clear and constructive in their judgments to offset the premillennial biblicism of men like Beck. The older "reasonable" supernaturalism of the "old Tübingen school" and the thoroughgoing rationalism of a man like Paulus were equally sterile.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST VENTURE DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS

I. TRAGEDY

A HUNDRED YEARS ago a youthful tutor in the theological faculty of the University of Tübingen, sitting at the window of the tutors' room which looked out upon the gateway arch, wrote a study of the life of Jesus. Except for a brief conclusion, the work, which made fifteen hundred pages, was rapidly and easily completed within a year, by October, 1834. The Tübingen publisher, Osiander, who was already busy with another famous book, Ferdinand Christian Baur's *Christian Gnosis*, took more than a year to set up the work and publish it, and *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, by David Friedrich Strauss, appeared, the first volume in July, 1835, the second early in 1836.

Few books, either scientific or popular, have roused the storms of public disapproval more quickly or more successfully. In Germany it was the book of the year, a year that could boast half a dozen great books. It created a sensation all over Europe and America. Soon, in England, working people who had never heard the name of Strauss or the title of his book were repeating the rumour that a German scholar had proved Christianity a fraud. It came to be one of the books of the century. But the immediate consequences to the author

were devastating. Thirty years later Strauss wrote bitterly, "That the work was not merely significant, but epoch making, was shown at once by the fact that it cost the author his teaching position and his academic career."¹ In fact, Strauss's success turned his life into a long-drawn tragedy. The remainder of his career was shadowed by the too great success of this eldest child of his brain. It had been born of a sincere concern for religion and a keen sense of obligation to the truth. But the book written to save mankind from childish superstition and religion from supposedly imminent dissolution damned the author for the rest of his days. A storm of abuse and calumny broke over his head with bewildering fury.

The whole world seemed at once to turn against the rash young writer. Before the second volume appeared, he was removed from the theological seminary and given a teaching appointment in the "lyceum" of his native city, a position which he could endure for a year only. No one came to Strauss's defense. His mystical and dogmatic father turned upon him and made home unbearable. For the moment even his closest friends among his Tübingen teachers and fellow students raised no voice on his behalf. In his hour of need his great teacher, Baur, publicly disavowed any connection between his own views and those of his former pupil and published what Strauss felt to be an unfair criticism of his method. Strauss was pathetically grateful to the "aged critic," DeWette, for giving his work honourable mention and fair treatment in his commentary on Matthew (1836). The few voices that raucously cried "Bravo" were most unwelcome, for they came from the radical political group of *littérateurs*, "Young Germany," which hailed him as an ally in their battle against religion. Heine merely added faggots to Strauss's funeral pyre when he boasted, "Heathenism ended as soon as the gods were rehabilitated as myths by the philosophers. Chris-

¹*Gesam. Schr.*, I, 5.

tianity has reached the same point; Strauss is the Porphyry of our time."²

Although Strauss had specifically requested that his work should not be judged until the second volume, with its constructive conclusions, should appear, the *Tübingen Review of Theology*, organ of his own university, immediately unlimbered its heaviest guns against him. Doctor Steudel, then the most famous of his teachers, led the attack with eighty pages in which he insinuated that Strauss was irreligious and immoral. The "revered Eschenmayer," influential Tübingen pastor and professor, followed with a supposedly philosophical discussion of the book as "The Iscariotism of our Days." They were supported by Johann Tobias Beck, a recent graduate, at the moment a pastor, who doubtless was thus advertising loudly for a call to a theological chair. The material rewards of theological conformity are well illustrated by the fact that, whereas Strauss immediately lost his little tutorship, Beck was called within six months to a professorship in Basel and seven years later returned to Tübingen to serve the remainder of his life as a pious bulwark of orthodoxy. Why Beck succeeded and Strauss failed is indicated by a remark of Philip Schaff in 1857: "The most popular professor of theology (at Tübingen), . . . Doctor Beck, . . . treats all modern novelties with the silence of utter contempt, and professes to know nothing but the Bible as the book of life."³

During the year 1836 the *Tübingen Review* contained some four hundred pages of attack upon Strauss. Other theological and religious periodicals paid the book an equal amount of attention. Between 1836 and 1840 innumerable ponderous tomes and passionate pamphlets boomed and shrieked at him. Soon theological schools were announcing semester courses on the "Straussian Controversy." Catholics as well as Protestants

²*Gedanken und Einfälle, Samml. Werke*, ed. Beyer, XII, 1, p. 295.

³*Germany*, p. 101.

were aroused. France, Holand, England, and eventually infant America took a hand in the Donnybrook Fair, even before the book was translated. Strauss replied with volumes of vigorous and pungent, sometimes volcanic, *Streitschriften*. In the preface to the second volume of the *Leben Jesu*, dated Ludwigsburg, October, 1837, he took Steudel and Eschenmayer sharply to task. The article by the latter was the "offspring of the legitimate marriage between theological ignorance and religious intolerance." His critics retorted in kind, and the fight went merrily on, to the great profit of publishers. Thus Strauss made an unintentional but generous contribution to the liveliness of the decade that had begun with the July Revolution in Paris.

Beck raised the eminently unscientific question whether Strauss's mythical theory was consistent with Christian creed. Other attacks were equally illogical and partisan. What evil epithets the orthodox did not hurl at the young upstart established no evidence of their self-restraint. "Modern Iscariot" was moderate. John Hoppers, London professor of Mental Philosophy and Logic—note the chair—returned from a brief tour of the Continent to write, "A book lately published in Tübingen on the life of Christ throws off from the hideous form of infidelity every remnant of the Christian mask."⁴ That typifies the attitude of the largest portion of Strauss's opponents. He was deliberately attempting to destroy the faith. He was intentionally undermining morality. According to Wolfgang Menzel, German literary pope *pro tempore*, he was a member of "Young Germany," and with them was planning a political *attentat*. Only two or three writers, Neander and Tholuck among them, insisted that Strauss's was a scientific work and must be scientifically answered. Practically all of the answers, even including Neander's, were based upon a theological approach. Hence the passion, anxiety, and in-

⁴*The Continent in 1835*, London, 1836; quoted from review in the *American Biblical Repository*, IX (1837), 515.

justice. Nearly thirty years later a writer in the *Westminster Review* could say, "The name of Strauss has long been a bug-bear in the English 'religious world.' High Churchmen and Low Churchmen . . . hush naughty children with the name of Strauss."⁵

The long—and mediocre—tragedy of the remainder of Strauss's life is quickly told. He never made a psychological recovery from the blow of dismissal from the university and from bitterness over the injustice of the attacks upon him. He fought back boldly, sometimes viciously, but never joyously. When his third edition appeared in 1838-39, he was weary of conflict and ready to make concessions to his opponents. The unanimity of the opposition suggested doubts as to the correctness of his conclusions. Writing "On the Passing and the Permanent in Christianity," he went so far as to say that, "as truly as mankind could never be without religion, so truly would Christianity never disappear. Christ would always remain the highest that we as religious beings would ever know." At the same time he was called to the chair of theology in the University of Zürich. But after long and painful hesitation on the part of the authorities, the appointment was cancelled because of popular clamour worked up by the conservatives. His literary irenicon made no impression upon his adversaries. He was still an outcast, and he was never allowed to forget it. In his fourth edition he withdrew his retraction and apologized for his moment of weakness.

In 1840 and 1841 he published his *Christian Doctrine in Its Historical Development*, the work to which the *Life of Jesus* had been an introduction. It made comparatively little stir, for, in spite of its thoroughgoing and relentless criticism of Christian dogma, Feuerbach's more radical *Nature of Christianity*, which appeared in 1841, overshadowed it. From that time on for nearly twenty years Strauss's pen never touched a religious theme.

⁵Vol. LXXXII (July, 1864), 83.

The last fifteen years of his life were filled with comparatively happy and successful literary activities, biographical, historical, and critical. In 1858 and 1859 his work on "his spiritual kinsman," Ulrich von Hutten, awakened warm and lively appreciation in the public mind and at the same time turned his thoughts toward religious themes. The eventual result was his *New Life of Jesus*, as the English translator called it, "The Life of Jesus Prepared for the German People," to translate the German title. It appeared in 1864, the year after Renan's famous *Vie de Jésus*, and, though more popularly conceived and executed than Strauss's first *Life of Jesus*, it could not compete with the Frenchman's facile pen, and was only moderately successful. The next year he wrote *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* and *The Halves and the Wholes*, in both of which he restated his uncompromising opposition to all truckling with what he regarded as uncritical sentimentalism and superstitious dogmatism. Finally in 1872 appeared *The Old Faith and the New*. It awakened almost as much interest and opposition as his first work, for, with typical Straussian incisiveness, he maintained that the old faith was gone. Religion remained, but not Christianity.

At the age of sixty-five, on February 8, 1873, in Ludwigsburg, the little Swabian city of his birth, he passed away, and two days later his body was buried by a large concourse of friends and admirers with the customary funeral addresses over the grave, but, as he specifically directed, without tolling of bells or religious service. The last that he wrote was a self-revealing triptych sent on December 29 to the daughter of an old friend. The final quatrain ran,

Möge schwach wie immer,
Aber hell und rein
Dieser letzte Schimmer,
Dieser Ton nur sein.

Be it faint as ever,
Life's last fading gleam,
High be the endeavor,
Clear and pure the beam.⁶

⁶*Gesam. Schr.*, XII, 226.

II. PROLOGUE TO THE TRAGEDY

The unhappy drama of Strauss's life can be understood only if one turns back to consider its prologue. Into the personal and local reasons for its tragedy it is unnecessary to enter in detail. The basic elements for it are to be discovered in his naïve honesty, his sensitive, humourless Swabian nature, the intolerant pietistic temper of his Swabian environment, and the disturbed and reactionary political, intellectual, and theological atmosphere of the post-Napoleonic period. Certain personal peculiarities aside, Strauss's mental history is typical of that of his century.

His preparation for the writing of the classic which damned him is of no little educational interest. His training in theology was begun in the "lower evangelical seminary" at picturesque Blaubeuren, which he entered in 1821, when not quite fourteen, to spend four idyllic years with Ferdinand Christian Baur as one of his instructors. Then in the famous evangelical *Stift* at equally picturesque Tübingen he spent five years more. By good fortune, he belonged for those nine years to a group of exceptionally brilliant students, the "great Blaubeuren class." While still at Blaubeuren, through the study of Livy under Baur, Strauss learned the principles of historical criticism as Niebuhr had developed them.

At Tübingen he came under the hand of Steudel, the last remnant of the "old Tübingen school," whose lectures he found absolutely unbearable. At first there was no professor at the university who could satisfy the inquiring minds of the precocious group. With several like-minded friends, poetically gifted and intensely serious, Strauss formed a group which began to roam at large through recent literature. In five years they recapitulated the previous sixty years of European thought. They quickly abandoned Kant for the charm of Schelling's nature philosophy and the romantic enthusiasm of

Thieck and Novalis. This curriculum easily led to what Strauss later called the twilight of Jacob Boehme's mysticism. Thence it was but a step to the theosophy and superstition of the Swabian doctor, poet, and "spirit-seer," Justinus Kerner. They were temporarily lost in a "labyrinth of magnetism and somnambulism," to use Strauss's own words. Strauss even went so far as to visit the two divinities of this phase of his development, Kerner and Frederike Hauffe, the "charming and spirited lady" whom Kerner immortalized as the "Prophetess of Prevorst." But he was too keen and logical of mind to wander long in such bypaths.

The guide out of the maze of conflicting opinions he found in Schleiermacher. When, after two years at Tübingen, he was ready for his distinctly theological studies, most fortunately his best Blaubeuren instructor, Baur, was called to the faculty of his old university. The future founder of the "new Tübingen school" had not yet entered upon his Hegelian phase, but had been following Schleiermacher since the latter's *Christian Faith* (*Der Christliche Glaube*) had appeared in 1821, and of Schleiermacher, therefore, Strauss heard much. He was deeply impressed by his profound religious feeling and the historical definiteness of his theological conceptions. Schleiermacher seemed to combine the best of Schelling's philosophy, Boehme's religious emotion, and the Romanticists' æsthetic enchantment, along with a dialectical keenness which the others lacked. As Strauss put it, "the mystical fog of romanticism was dispelled by the rising sun of Schleiermacher."⁷ Moreover, Strauss discovered in himself this same critical ability and with it a new and hitherto unimagined joy in his studies. Although Baur as yet said little of Hegel, Strauss and his circle, continuing their independent study, read Kant's *Prolegomena* and Hegel's *Phaenomenologie* during their last year at the university. Baur's lectures on the Book of Acts and

⁷*Gesam. Schr.*, X, 205.

the Corinthian letters continued to sharpen Strauss's critical faculties and his historical appreciation. As Eduard Zeller pointed out, Strauss took the circuitous route by way of mysticism from dogmatic faith to independent criticism of tradition. Strange as the journey may appear it is not at all unusual or psychologically difficult to explain.

When Strauss ended his student career in 1830 with a brilliant examination and the capture of two prizes, one in homiletics and one in catechetics, the high regard in which he was held is shown by the fact that he was asked to deliver the sermon at the university's celebration of the third centenary of the Augsburg Confession, on June 25, 1830. After leaving the university, he tested his practical abilities as teacher, pastor, and preacher, with eminent success in every capacity. He won the fullest love and respect of every one, especially in the preparatory seminary at Maulbronn, where Zeller was one of his pupils.

In the autumn of 1831 he went to Berlin to make the personal acquaintance of the men from whom he had learned so much, Schleiermacher and especially Hegel, mighty rivals, both in the fullness of their powers and fame. But in Berlin a strange reversal of his plans awaited him. He had only introduced himself to Hegel and heard his first lectures when the great philosopher died of cholera, on November 14, 1831. As fate would have it, he learned of this unhappy event through Schleiermacher himself, on the occasion of his first formal visit.

He thought for a time of leaving the city, but eventually remained for the winter and established personal connections with Hegel's widow and with various members of the Hegelian school, Marheineke, Hitzig, and Vatke. He industriously made excerpts from the notebooks of students who had attended the lectures of Hegel, Schleiermacher, and others. He listened to Schleiermacher's lectures and sermons and discov-

ered much to stimulate him, but was unfavourably impressed with the "mercurial variability" of his arguments, while Hegel's dialectic more and more attracted him. Moreover, he reacted strongly against Schleiermacher's lectures on the life of Jesus, which were not given that year but which he read in students' notebooks. This was the immediate occasion of his writing his *Life of Jesus*.

After a winter semester in Berlin, Strauss returned home and, just after the beginning of the summer semester, he was called as tutor (*Repetent*) to his old theological seminary at Tübingen. Here he found himself once more in a circle of stimulating friends, and he was wholeheartedly welcomed by the students, especially by some who, like Zeller, had known him as a tutor at Maulbronn. As an apostle of Hegelianism he lectured with brilliant success on philosophy, making the subject vital and interesting and capturing the student body. His triumph did not increase his popularity with the philosophical faculty, to be sure, yet few academic careers have begun more brilliantly.

After only three semesters, however, in the autumn of 1833, he gave up lecturing to devote himself to the plan, cherished since his winter in Berlin, of writing a life of Jesus which should be at the same time critically and scientifically honest and religiously fruitful. The task he set himself was suggested by the combination of historical, theological, and philosophical studies which he had followed at Tübingen. Before he had finished his student days there, he had already reached the conclusion that the most fruitful element in Hegel's philosophy was the distinction between *Begriff* and *Vorstellung*, between the true "notion," or fundamental idea, and the temporary historical "concept" which represents it. As he had listened to Baur's lectures on the Book of Acts and Corinthians and came to apply this distinction to religious ideas, the question arose whether the historical portions of the

Bible, and especially the Gospels, constituted the fundamental ideas of religion, or merely represented temporary forms of thought, to which faith was not bound. He had decided for the latter alternative and conceived the idea of writing, from this point of view, a history of Christian theology which should follow it from its biblical origins through its "dissolution in deism and rationalism"—for he believed Christianity to be moribund—in order finally "to build it up again in purified form through the idea."

While listening to Schleiermacher in Berlin, he determined to begin his project with a preliminary study of the life of Jesus. There were to be three parts: first, an account of the life of Jesus as traditionally accepted; second, a critical section which would do away, for the most part, with the Jesus of history; and, third, a constructive section which should dogmatically restore what had been historically destroyed.

III. STRAUSS'S ACHIEVEMENT

What he actually produced was only the second part of the work which he had planned. There were, to be sure, a few pages at the end, conceived in the beginning but written after the greater part of the manuscript was in the printer's hands, in which he tried to show that what had been proved false as history was still true as dogma. "Thus by a higher mode of argumentation," says Strauss, "from the idea of God and man in their reciprocal relations, the truth of the conception which the church forms of Christ appears to be confirmed, and we seem to be reconducted to the orthodox point of view, though by an inverted path."⁸ To the vast majority of his readers it was the truth, and not the road to it, which had been inverted. Such a "dogmatic reconstruction" could not disguise the devastating consequences of the criticism which preceded it. That was, on the surface, his

⁸*Leben Jesu*, II, ed. 4, p. 707; E. T., p. 779.

unpardonable error. He had destroyed, but he had not rebuilt, and he could not rebuild.

Few of his fellows were so thoroughly Hegelian as to be satisfied with the idea of God in man when the historical Jesus had vanished. In the acid of criticism Jesus had been dissolved into a mere idea. The century's search for the real Jesus began with a complete failure. The lost Jesus had existed, to be sure, but the first expedition not only failed to find him, but brought back word that he could never be found. It availed little to proclaim that the loss did not matter. Strauss himself confessed,

Through the results of the foregoing investigation, so it appears, . . . the endless treasure of truth and life by which, for eighteen centuries, humanity has nourished its growth seems herewith laid waste, that which is most exalted overthrown in the dust, God robbed of His grace and man of his worth, the bond between heaven and earth torn asunder.⁹

This was the head and front of Strauss's offense. But beneath it was a more flagrant but hidden crime, which his opponents felt but could not uncover. His real offense, as Baur said, was that he held up a mirror to his own age and exposed its spiritual vacuity. His work was a bitter reaction against both of the dominant dogmatic tendencies of the time, supernaturalism and rationalism. The pretentious edifices of faith and reason and of half-reason and half-faith—all alike he tore them down. Likewise he attacked what seemed to him the ill-assorted compromises of Schleiermacher's theology. When he had finished, nothing remained but the airy, ghost-like ideas of Hegelian philosophy. Strauss's inexorable logic allowed him no concessions and no compromises.

What gave the book its tremendous power was its complete unity, its ruthless consistency. But that was also Strauss's

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 663; E. T., p. 757.

nemesis. One cannot excavate an ancient city with a steam shovel, nor do wood carving with a meat-chopper. One cannot draw a straight line through history and put all of the false on one side, and all of the true on the other. Strauss was wrong in his logic, his historical method, and his philosophical foundation. Yet in spite of the uncompromising inflexibility which ruined Strauss academically and made the *Leben Jesu* an unparalleled success from the publisher's point of view, it was almost equally important in its scientific contribution.

One can say of few best sellers, what one may truthfully say of this book, that its effects have been as deep and permanent as they were spectacular. Recent Christ-myth schools in Germany and France are only refining Strauss's methods. But its effects were good as well as bad. Forty years later, Eduard Zeller, who had meantime become the well-known historian of philosophy, said—and it is still true after one hundred years—that Strauss's epoch-making work had not only called forth in the theological field a movement which was still in progress, but had also exercised a decisive influence upon philosophy and the general state of culture.¹⁰ That is not all. It inaugurated a new period of critical, scientific study of the records of Jesus' life. It definitely turned the attention of Baur and his disciples to the problems of Gospel criticism. It set a host of scholars at work defending the historicity of the Gospel records. It gave another group fresh interest and new points of view from which to examine the literary relationships of the Gospels. The remorseless logic with which Strauss followed and applied the principles of his master, Hegel, made his book a thoroughgoing criticism of his philosophy. He proved both supernaturalism and rationalism to be helpless in the face of the new weapons which were being forged in the workshops of historical criticism

¹⁰D. F. Strauss, p. 1.

and scientific investigation. In "exposing the spiritual vacuity of his age," he was making a frontal attack upon society as a whole. Little wonder that he suffered! Little wonder that he is still remembered!

The factors entering into the production of such a classic as the *Leben Jesu* are many. No matter how original a scholar's imagination, no matter how penetrating and critical his judgment, society does far more of the writing of any book that lives than the author himself. Any good biography tells as much about its author as about its subject. But it tells still more about the society out of which it comes. Because of what Jesus has come to symbolize, this is particularly true of an attempt to portray him. The general state of culture and the political situation; current economic and social problems, theories, and ideals; literature, art, and philosophy; and especially current estimates of social and ethical values—all the inmost secrets of the social mind will be mirrored in the discussions of Jesus which any age produces. The "lives of Jesus" of any period will reveal the character of society and of current Christianity. In 1866, when Strauss felt that he could look back with no small degree of detachment upon his work of thirty years before, he wrote, "It was, so to speak, an inspired book, that is, the author had taken up into himself the mightiest evolutionary impulse of current theological science and out of this impulse the book came forth."¹¹

In order, therefore, to understand the beginning which Strauss had made, the reaction against it, and the subsequent progress of this great adventure down to the present time, it is necessary to seek for a clear picture of the age which he startled out of its self-assertive, but none-too-complacent dogmatism. The century's advances and retrogressions in the study of Jesus' life and significance are only intelligible within the framework of Occidental culture as a whole.

¹¹*Gesam. Schr.*, I, 4.

CHAPTER II

PROGRESS, REACTION, AND CONFUSION THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENTIFIC BASIS

I. BIEDERMEIER DEUTSCHLAND—THE ERA OF MEDIOCRITY

FOR numerous reasons the year 1835 is significant in the history of Occidental politics, morals, and religion. It was the year in which Johann Nickolas Dreyse, after thirty years of effort on a suggestion of Napoleon, produced the first practical breech-loading needle gun, and so made mass murder much easier and quicker. Thirty-one years later Sadowa proved its efficiency. In 1835 the first German railway was opened, with a speed of ten miles an hour, a speed so rapid that, according to the Bavarian medical association, it was certain to drive both passengers and onlookers mad. The completion of Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* marked the year as a point of departure in German prehistory and philology. Carl Schwarz named it the year in which "the most modern theology" began, and Otto Pfeiderer called attention to three outstanding works on biblical criticism which appeared: Wilhelm Vatke's history of the evolution of Old Testament religion, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and Baur's discussion of "the so-called pastoral epistles." Equally important was Baur's other work, *The Christian Gnosis, or the Christian Philosophy of*

Religion in its Historical Development. Of greater scientific originality and permanent worth was Lachmann's little-noticed Latin dissertation, *On the Order of the Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels*, which Wellhausen regarded as the first clearly stated solution of the Synoptic problem.¹

It might appear that a new age was at the dawning. But the darkest hour of the night of reaction was still ahead. Vatke's really revolutionary work, the first to state the historical consequences of the source criticism of the Pentateuch, made no impression because of the forbidding mantle of Hegelian phraseology which enveloped it. The cold fog of Hegelianism repelled the ordinary reader from Baur's work also. The significance of Lachmann's conclusions was not recognized because of the uncritical temper of contemporary New Testament students.

The year 1835 has much in common with 1935. It was a period of bitter conflict between the old and the new. It was a time of political reaction and intellectual retrogression, when a motley flotsam and jetsam of old superstitions and outworn dogmatisms were continually being agitated by vigorous new currents of intellectual freedom and scientific research, while the incoming flood of the industrial revolution was obliterating all the old social landmarks. In that same year Karl Gutzkow's *Wally, die Zweiflerin* (*Wally, the Doubter*) brought down the censorship of the German federal diet upon "Young Germany," with disastrous results to that group of loud-mouthed but weak-kneed radicals. The *Erweckungsbewegung* in Germany, the *revail* in French countries, the second awakening in America, and evangelicalism in England had not purified the church, but, instead, had heightened its emotions and embittered its quarrels. Among the pietistically inclined, "a deeply rooted morbidity," in Schleier-

¹Carl Lachmann, *De ordine narrationum in evangeliiis synopticis*, in TKS, 1835, pp. 570-90; J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung*, 2d ed., 1911, p. 33.

macher's words, "a scabies that set the noblest juices of the spirit to festering," as Friedrich Theodor Vischer put it, along with unscrupulous ecclesiastical politics and unbridled abusiveness, as seen in the powerful Hengstenberg, poisoned orthodoxy.

At the moment, powerful and far-seeing leadership was wanting. Beethoven had died in 1827, Schubert in 1828, Niebuhr and Hegel in 1831, Goethe in 1832, and Schleiermacher in 1834. Classicism had been succeeded by romanticism, and that was soon to give place to realism. In music, in literature, in philosophy, in theology, there were no new voices which rose clear above the confused babel of raucous disputation. Heine could not lift Goethe's lyre. Baur could not fill Schleiermacher's chair. Schelling was a pathetic ghost of his own former brilliancy. Schopenhauer and Lotze were no successors to Hegel. In 1818 Goethe had said, "I thank God that I am not young in so thoroughly finished a world." What might he have said in 1835? In 1836 Immermann's novel aptly described his contemporaries as *Die Epigonen* (*The Afterborn*), weakling sons of dead heroes of Homeric mold. In art, in architecture, in literature, and in theology, it was an age of mediocrity, well called "Biedermeier Deutschland."

For the mass of the people it was an age of indescribable disillusionment and confusion. Gutzkow's *Wally, the Doubter*, which made an even greater sensation than Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, is a perfect illustration. It exhibited the deep interest of the period in theological questions. Wally, the heroine, goes mad and commits suicide because of religious doubts which her lover has argued too convincingly, doubts in which the Wolfenbüttel Fragments of Reimarus play an important part. Saint-Simonian religion and the "emancipation of the flesh," as well as of the mind, play a lurid rôle in the story. It was far from being a purely fanciful picture. Gutzkow tells how, in Frankfort, he had met a "bright, blooming young maiden

who, when the conversation turned to the theological controversies of the time, was frightfully aroused. She held up both hands as if to ward off some great danger, and, her eyes wide with terror, cried at me, 'Do not talk about that. Merely to think about all that makes me crazy.'"²

II. PREPARATION FOR THE SEARCH

Before the search for the historical Jesus could begin, a way of escape from conflict and confusion had to be found. Controversial issues, however difficult and delicate, had to be discussed; difficulties had to be faced; the presuppositions of biblicistic dogmatism had to be broken down; and new foundations for critical historical study had to be laid in fresh and different philological, philosophical, and theological systems. So long as the Bible was held to be verbally inspired and historically inerrant, so long as allegorical, dogmatic, and "theopneustic" methods of exegesis were allowed legitimacy, it was impossible to arrive at historical conclusions regarding any fact in the biblical accounts. Free inquiry and unprejudiced, undogmatic, historical interpretation were indispensable prerequisites to historical investigation. After the fall of Napoleon a whole half century was torn by the conflict between the persistent forces of reaction and a new spirit of freedom, both deeply aroused and embittered by the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars. But, below the surface eddies of retrogression, there ran a mighty undertow of new currents carrying mankind out into strange and ever-widening seas of discovery.

A long series of events had prepared the Western world for its new adventure. The transfer of the center of world activity from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic coast, the development of the Hanseatic cities with their free citizens, discovery and adventure in America and Asia, the Renaissance

²Wiegler, II, 424.

and the Reformation, the rise of industrial civilization, all this had contributed richly toward the emancipation of the mind. The heroes of the war for intellectual freedom were many. Without Spinoza and Descartes, Marco Polo and Columbus, Copernicus and Galileo, Erasmus and Luther, Hobbes and Bacon, the new era of inquiry, research, and discovery in science, philosophy, and religion would have been impossible. The fruit of four centuries of groping, 1300-1700, was rationalism, with its triple offspring, deism in England, the enlightenment in France, and the *Aufklärung* in Germany. The spread of the rationalistic attitude of mind had undermined the two chief pillars of orthodox apologetics, miracles and prophecy. The virus had attacked the defenders of the faith in England, and the Wesleyan revival had not touched the intellectual processes of churchmen. In France "illumination" brought freedom, freedom bred revolution, naturalism became materialism, and deism ended in atheism. In Germany rationalism became the *Aufklärung*, the "clarification" of ideas. It was as fully based on human reason as the corresponding movements in England and France, but different conditions brought a subtle alteration. Like the hydrangea, the flower had its colour determined by the soil. To understand how the enlightenment in Germany opened the way to a new appreciation of Jesus, its special character must be borne in mind.

In view of the strength of the forces of reaction, the second quarter of the nineteenth century would seem to have been peculiarly unfitted to serve as the starting point for liberal theology and progressive, scientific methods of biblical study. In the year 1835, all things considered, Germany would seem to have been the last place in the world for the beginning of the modern adventure in search of the historical Jesus. Yet certain peculiarities fitted that much-maligned land to become a leader in biblical research. In order that the real Jesus

might be sought and found, various prerequisites had to be satisfied. Germany in the nineteenth century combined them as no other nation did. She had numerous theological faculties with a spirit of research such as no other country could exhibit. The "clarification," defined by Kant as the emancipation of the human spirit, made the historical study of Jesus' life possible; pietism made it sympathetic and appreciative of moral and religious values; philological method made interpretation accurate; historical method made it intelligent.

None of the great leaders of theological thought in Germany between 1770 and 1830 entirely escaped the influence of pietism. Nearly every one of them, Lessing, Herder, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, was reared in the midst of it. Though Goethe was less deeply influenced, it was no small matter that he, Europe's greatest literary genius, a national hero before whom all Germany stood at attention, repudiated the forms and institutions of religion, but never religion itself. The fact marks a characteristic difference between the England of Shelley, the France of Voltaire, and the Germany of Goethe. It was the German marriage of pietism with the "clarification" of thought due to rationalism that gave birth to modern biblical research.

III. THE PHILOLOGICAL PREPARATION

Of the innumerable social factors which contributed to the development of scientific biblical criticism, none were more influential than the Renaissance and the Reformation. The revival of learning which was coincident with the arrival of Greek scholars and Greek manuscripts in western Europe provided the knowledge of the Greek language, the source materials, and the stimulus of interest necessary for prosecuting textual criticism and seeking the philological interpretation of the language of the New Testament. The Reformation rendered indispensable service in breaking down the authority

of the Roman church, of the pope, and of the Vulgate text of Jerome. In Protestant countries it was now possible to question the inspiration of Jerome's second-hand translation and to seek the original Greek text of the New Testament and its true interpretation untrammelled by the overshadowing authority of a sacrosanct Latin text.

The comparison of the numerous manuscripts of the New Testament and the attempts to ferret out the original text from the multitudinous variant readings could not but serve to break down the theory of verbal inspiration. A beginning was made in the publication of the Greek text by Erasmus in 1516 and Cardinal Ximenes in 1520. Progress beyond the weak efforts of Theodore Beza came through the labours of the French Oratorian, Richard Simon; the Englishmen, John Mill and Richard Bentley; the Swabian exegete and pre-millenarian, Johann Albrecht Bengel; the Swiss commentator, Johann Jacob Wettstein, who had to take refuge in Holland; the Jena professor, Johann Jacob Griesbach; and, finally, the Berlin classical professor, Carl Lachmann, whose New Testament appeared in 1831, and in a better, because more radical, edition in 1842-50. These men and the great textual critics of the nineteenth century, Tischendorf, Westcott, Hort, and (perhaps) Hermann von Soden, rendered other services which entitle them to honourable mention. Here they are enumerated, first to give credit where credit is due, second to emphasize the fact that the original text of the New Testament documents as they came from the hands of their writers is not known and never can be known, and, third, to celebrate the progress which New Testament science has made in its recognition of that fact.

Mark has recently (1935) appeared in a new critical edition under English auspices and the other books are eventually to follow. But, unlike earlier editions, this one makes no attempt to present a final text, but only materials for

study. Westcott and Hort's text has been canonized in England, Tischendorf's in Germany. In the new edition, each student will be forced to observe that the reading he uses is merely that of a certain group of manuscripts in competition with other groups. The text of the New Testament is as accurately determined as that of other ancient writings, much more accurately than many, the Old Testament for example. A modern critical text is far superior to that of the King James or the revised version, but it cannot be proved to be exactly that of the autographs. The recognition of textual uncertainties in the Gospels is an indispensable preliminary to a search for the historical Jesus.³

Humanists, such as Erasmus, and open-minded theologians, such as Tyndale, Zwingli, Calvin, and Beza, as well as dogmatic natures, such as Luther and Melancthon, made their contributions toward a more sensible interpretation of the Bible than had been practiced by the scholastics. But Protestantism exhibited two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the growing biblicism and dogmatism of those who demanded some authority to put into the scales against the pope and the Roman church built a wall of adamant in the way of the progress of honest, unprejudiced, scientific exegesis. On the other hand, scholars who were acquainted with the developing philological science of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could not but see in the Greek New Testament a field which was to be cultivated with the same tools as were used on the Greek and Latin classics. The vast collection of parallels to New Testament ideas and expressions collected by Wettstein from all available sources, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, is still a mine of treasures for the student of the New Testament and a monument to the conviction, im-

³See the numerous discussions of the text of the New Testament by such men as C. R. Gregory, Sir Frederick Kenyon, Alexander Souter, and Kirsopp Lake, as well as those mentioned in the text. Cf. new edition of Mark edited by S. C. E. Legg, Oxford, 1935.

plicit, but not clearly expressed, that the New Testament is to be understood only in its historical setting and is to be interpreted like other ancient writings.

It was long before this dimly felt principle came to outward and definite expression. The common sense of Luther and of various English reformers rejected the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, that is the doctrine of a multiple sense in the Scriptures, on the ground that "by that means everie thing can be made of any thing." William Tyndale said that "God is a spirit and all his words are spiritual, and his literal sense is spiritual." Luther said, "The Holy Ghost is the all-simplest writer that is in heaven or earth; therefore his words can have no more than one simplest sense, which we call the scriptural, or literal, meaning."⁴ However, Luther, his fellow reformers, and, after them, the Protestant theologians in England and on the Continent were far from reaching clarity in the matter of Scripture interpretation. They decried allegory when it supported their opponents, yet could not help seeing it in the Scriptures when it aided them. Only in a later age did the conclusion which Luther just missed become clear, that the Bible was to be interpreted like any other book. John Locke is deservedly placed at the head of those who insisted that the Bible should be given a contextual and philological interpretation. But two German scholars, Ernesti and Semler, were the first to make scientific procedures in interpretation the common property of the learned world.

IV. GRAMMATICO-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Johann August Ernesti (1707-81) was for the last thirty years of his life professor of classical literature and, for part

⁴See the chapter on "The Senses of Scripture" in Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man*; Luther's reply to Eisner in Köstlin, *Luther's Theology*, II, 58, 284; both quoted by Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, New York, 1886, pp. 300, 329.

of that time, also professor of oratory and theology in the University of Leipzig. As a famous orator and Latinist, the "German Cicero," he exercised great influence, and when, following, as he admitted, the lead of John Locke, he threw the weight of his learning toward a philological interpretation of the Bible, insisting that, in this respect, it must be treated like any other book, he gave no small impetus to progress. Believing in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, he insisted that philosophy had nothing to do with its interpretation and refused to read into it the "neological" doctrines of rationalism. Partly because of his reputation for conservatism, his *Institute of New Testament Interpretation*, first published in Latin in 1751, was widely translated and became a textbook in all Protestant lands. As annotated by various pupils and followers in the original and in translations, it exercised a wide influence in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is, to be sure, far from meeting the requirements of today, but it was long so far ahead of the actual practice of New Testament commentators, so "modern" in the main, that it constitutes a remarkable achievement.

Ernesti insisted that the task of the interpreter was to discover and explain "the meaning of another's language, . . . to attach to another's language the same meaning that the author himself attached to it." His principle that, at the same time and place, a word cannot have many meanings, as he intended it, prepares for his very necessary observation that it is an error to "affirm that the words of Scripture mean all that they possibly can mean." And so, with some reservations, he attacked the problem of allegorizing, which so often "degenerates into empty and ridiculous nonsense." The sense of words, Ernesti maintained, depends upon the *usus loquendi*, and that is to be determined by giving attention to the "time, religion, sect, education, common life, and civil affairs, all of which have influence upon the author's language, and

characterize it." Thus one seeks the literal, or grammatical and historical sense. "The grammatical sense is the only true one. Language can be properly interpreted only in a philological way. . . . Of course, the Scriptures are to be investigated by the same rules as other books."⁵

These may serve as a few samples of Ernesti's good judgment in matters of interpretation. Practically every rule which he laid down has implicit reference to some common error of interpretation, and every one of them is being broken today by multitudes who still insist on reading their own ideas and doctrines into the Scriptures, instead of allowing the documents to speak for themselves out of the ancient *milieu* which produced them and with the overtones and harmonies—or discords—that belong to their original production.

Johann Salomo Semler (1725-91), unlike Ernesti, was a famous "neologist," who, as professor of theology at Halle from 1753 to his death, exercised a powerful influence in the direction of a scientific, non-dogmatic attitude toward biblical studies. He was not a thoroughgoing rationalist, but was moving toward romanticism, for he recognized the variety and richness of life and of history and could not cut down either life or religion to fit the narrow limits of reason. Yet he belonged unquestionably to the neologists who were attempting to make religion reasonable. In 1828 an American writer credited him with overthrowing the metaphysics and exegesis of his day, which were bad enough, only to establish "neology," which was worse.⁶ Therefore he was opposed by the great majority of pious biblical students and his works never enjoyed the popularity accorded Ernesti.

⁵See Moses Stuart, *Elementary Principles of Interpretation*, "tr. from the Latin of J. A. Ernesti and Accompanied by Notes . . .," 3d ed., Andover and New York, 1838, pp. 2, 11 ff.

⁶In *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*, I (1828), 23 ff.; cf. John F. Hurst, *History of Rationalism*, New York, 1865, pp. 125-37.

In the New Testament field, his greatest services resulted from his insistence upon a historical and psychological approach to interpretation and from his studies in the text and canon. His *Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon* (1771-75) is one of the memorable books which have made history by breaking down the prejudices that have prevented progress. Not all of the books of the Old and New Testaments, he maintained, stand upon the same level. If the ancients were uncertain as to which books were sacred—and it was easy to show from Eusebius that they were—then surely the modern Christian has the right to choose among them. Such conclusions were of far-reaching significance for the use of the Gospels in the writing of the life of Jesus, although, unfortunately, their application has long been overlooked.

The principle for which Semler is justly most famous is his description of the New Testament books as ancient Jewish writings. He rejected the accounts of the miracles; the demoniacs were not demon-possessed, but merely sick. Local Jewish ideas on such matters provided the *milieu* within which the New Testament books and their writers were to be seen and understood. Ernesti had said as much, but he had not carried the idea out with consistency. Semler insisted that religion had "in the beginning been clothed in Jewish garments for those hearers." The Synoptic Gospels were especially suited to Jewish taste, but the Gospel of John presupposed hearers "who were in a position to reflect upon the truth," a judgment much like Herder's and Fichte's. He drew no conclusions as to the relative value of the two types of account.

Semler's principle that the Scriptures are to be regarded as products of their times led him unfortunately into one serious and widely adopted error, the "theory of accommodation." His favourite text was Mark 4:33, "he spoke the word to

them as they were able to hear it." In "accommodating" themselves to their times, Jesus and his disciples, so he thought, actually concealed the truth and their own intentions and thus really founded the church on falsehood. The possibilities which lie in such a method of interpretation are as ominous as in the allegorical method. It was only a short step to the assumption that the very belief in the resurrection was based upon a pious fraud of the disciples, as Reimarus maintained. The consistency of the exegete was maintained at the expense of the honesty of the founders of Christianity.

It seems strange that, when Semler came face to face with Reimarus' explanation of the aims of Jesus, he could not see that there was in principle no abyss between himself and the "Wolfenbüttel Unknown," that, indeed, the latter was merely carrying the principle of accommodation a step farther. Reimarus made Jesus a revolutionary who was attempting to found an earthly Jewish kingdom by fraud and revolt and at the same time a teacher of true morality who, through his anticipated earthly messianic kingdom, hoped to lead men to "the great true end of religion, namely eternal blessedness." Semler could only say that a combination of such aims was unthinkable.⁷ Yet, although a teacher who conceals his true principles in order to win followers may not be on so low a plane as a well-intentioned revolutionary, still the latter does seem to avoid a certain element of Jesuitical deceit.

To Semler it seemed perfectly natural that there should be an outer and an inner religion, an ecclesiastical and a private religion of quite different kinds. That was the way of the pietism in which he had grown up and out of which he had come. No one would deny that the true teacher will have

⁷Joh. Salomo Semler, *Beantwortung der Fragmente eines Ungenannten, insbesondere vom Zweck Jesu und seiner Jünger*, 2d ed., Halle, 1770, pp. 15-27; cf. Leopold Zscharnack, *Lessing und Semler*, Giessen, 1905, pp. 316-30, esp. p. 327; see ch. IV, n. 1.

one message for the child and another for the adult. In the nature of the case, the Gospel could not be preached to the Greeks in the same terms as to the Jews. Semler was perfectly justified in saying that the modern man must separate the ancient Jewish shell from the kernel, the contemporary from the eternal. But that is not what the accommodation theory is usually taken to mean or what Semler meant by it. He ruined his idea of historical interpretation by introducing this alien, unnecessary, and misleading element.

Thus even the most progressive scholars of the eighteenth century were far from seeing their problems clearly, to say nothing of the necessary solutions. It required a host of earnest seekers after the truth, Michaelis, Eichhorn, De Wette, and many more, before any general agreement could be reached, even within university circles, as to the application of the rules of grammatical and historical interpretation to the Bible. The allegorical interpretation of the Bible, with all of its evils, did yeoman service during authoritarian ages in preventing the literal application and enforcement of its antiquated ideas and laws. If, as Tyndale, Luther, and others maintained, its literal sense alone was true, the Christian was thrown into a veritable morass of confusions, inconsistencies, and impracticable regulations. Only a proper understanding of history and a common-sense, historical interpretation could rescue Christian faith from an impossible dilemma.

The basic difficulty was that which the rationalists of the *Aufklärung* had attacked, the dogmatic interpretation and and literalistic application of the Bible. The purely philological interpretation of the texts could be carried on by any dogmatist, with sad results. But in the understanding of the true values of the Bible and of Jesus as a historical character, no progress could be made until clarity had been reached as to the nature of religion and revelation, and the relation of both to history. The historical interpretation of the Gospels

could advance only as the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of history made progress. These had been the chief problems of the age preceding Strauss. They are the outstanding problems of the present generation. Since they were the rocks on which Strauss's interpretation of Jesus foundered, it is necessary now to turn to the status of these discussions in his day.

CHAPTER III

THE SEARCH FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND OF HISTORY

I. GERMANY'S STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

BETWEEN the *Aufklärung* and modern Germany there had stood some of the greatest original geniuses of Europe's intellectual history, Schiller and Goethe, Lessing, Herder, and Schleiermacher, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. That was the age also of Klopstock and Wieland, of Schubert and Mendelssohn. It seemed as if the era of Napoleon had outdone itself in Germany in producing supermen, not of the battlefield, but of the realm of the spirit. In their hands classicism turned toward romanticism, rationalism became idealism, supernaturalism and dogmatism gave way to science and historical criticism. They carried over the best of rationalism into the new era.

In the hands of the rationalists, "reason" had found the biblical revelation unreasonable and inconsistent at a thousand points. The brave fight which rationalism had made against magic, witchcraft, and kindred superstitions gradually bore fruit. But churchmen could give up neither the biblical miracles nor the idea of a supernatural revelation, for they could discover no other way to save the autonomy of religion. Strange to say, even the best of the German philosophers were extremely wary on these points. Lessing, Herder, Kant, Fichte,

and Hegel did not deny that Jesus worked miracles. But they did not disguise from themselves the very serious difficulties which beset a religion dependent for its authority upon a revelation recorded in an ancient book and authenticated only by ancient accounts of miracles and supernatural communications. Their hesitating and tentative steps toward freedom from dogmatic trammels are instructive.

II. FROM RATIONALISM TO ROMANTICISM

Lessing saw what the grammatico-historical interpretation of the Bible implied. He pointed out to the orthodox that their very trust in the Scriptures put them at the mercy of any scholar who, like Michaelis, could "melt down their ancient treasures and put a new stamp upon them" by means of his critical and antiquarian knowledge. He declared not only that "no historical truth can be demonstrated" and, therefore, that "nothing can be demonstrated by historical truths," but also that "accidental truths of history can never become the proof of the necessary truths of reason."¹ Ancient stories of miracles and of the fulfillment of prophecy were no evidence now. Even if genuine, they could not prove the dogmas of orthodoxy. "Even if," he says, "I have no evidence to offer to disprove that Jesus raised a man from the dead, must I, therefore, hold it true that God had a Son who is of the same nature as Himself?" Such an argument—and its truth is self-evident—immediately and completely exploded both biblicism and rationalism.

In spite of thus dealing what has been called "the worst blow historical Christianity ever received," Lessing did not deny either the historicity of Jesus or the value of his teachings. Indeed Jesus' teachings held him to faith in Christianity. History might not prove the eternal truths of reason, but it was something vital and powerful. It was God's "Education of the Human Race." Like Schiller, he believed that, "not backward

¹*Werke*, ed. Witkowski, Leipzig (1911), VII, 82-85.

towards Arcadia, but forward towards Elysium leads our way." Indeed, he took a most alarming leap into the future. The Old Testament was an elementary book and the child that was being instructed by it (the Jewish people) had long outgrown it. The child's teachers, the rabbis, had been compelled to torture and twist its meaning to make out of it something to hold the growing pupil's attention, with the result that the pupil had developed a petty, distorted, and captious spirit. "A better teacher," Lessing said, "must come and snatch the outgrown elementary book out of the child's hands.—Jesus came." But this only brought the child to adolescence. If the Golden Age was in the future, even Christianity, as now known, was not final. The perfectibility of Christianity, the possibility of improving it, was an essential element in the deterministic Spinozan pantheism to which Lessing eventually subscribed.

Theoretical hope of a future Elysium was, after all, only the woof to the pietistic warp of Lessing's faith. Therefore he could say, in his publication of the Wolfenbüttel *Fragment Concerning the Resurrection*, and repeat most emphatically, in a later "anti-Goetze" fulmination, certain fundamental truths which make him the founder of modern liberal religion:

"The letter is not the spirit; and the Bible is not religion. Consequently attacks on the letter and the Bible are not necessarily attacks on the spirit and on religion. . . . There was religion before the Bible came. Christianity existed before the evangelists and apostles had written. . . . The religion is not true because the evangelists and apostles taught it, rather, they taught it because it was true."²

In this Lessing made a fundamental contribution to religious thought. Christianity is a social product. It is not a book-religion. The book did not make it, it made the book. No truer or more fruitful evaluation of that vital and vitalizing book has ever been penned. The Bible is the product of men's ex-

²*Op. cit.*, VII, 54 f., 191-226.

perience. Lessing himself may not have fully realised it, but, in making history "God's education of the human race," he uncovered the true value of both history and the Bible. Written history cannot, to be sure, prove any truth. It is only the notebook of students in the school of truth. Written history—and this applies fully to the Bible—has value only as it records truth that has been learned from experience. Through events God reveals Himself; written history is the record of what man has learned.

Lessing was the clearest thinker of his age. Herder had a very different mind. Being a true romanticist, Herder became, so Kant said, "the great artist of illusion." Because he was an artist, his sympathetic appreciation of foreign and ancient cultures and his creative imagination allowed him to see in the orientalisms of the Bible meanings to which rationalism and criticism were blind. He could show how rich and varied life is and how impossible it is to confine it within the narrow limits of rationalism. Yet his romanticism opened the doors to the obscurantism of nineteenth-century orthodoxy. His mind was too hospitable. He could accept the Bible as a supernatural revelation and still apply to it the rules of criticism. He could believe in miracles and science at the same time. He could write a life of Jesus according to John and another according to the first three Gospels.

His contribution to philosophy was no small one, for he is to be counted the founder of the philosophy of history. His contribution to the study of the life of Jesus lies in his integration of that life into the magnificent drama which, to his eyes, unfolded in history, from the time when first the earth became "a star among the stars" down to his own age, where he stands, as if on a mighty promontory, with romantic enthusiasm watching "reason and the strengthened common activity of men go forward on their irresistible march."³

³*Ideen zur Philos. der Gesch. der Menschheit*, Part 3, 1787, *Sämmtl. Werke*, ed. Suphan, XIV, Berlin, 1909, p. 493.

In his general attitude toward theological and biblical questions Herder moved in the world of Kant and Lessing. For him every uncovering of truth is revelation. Reflection, inspiration, illumination, revelation are only different ways of describing the process of discovery. He made two clear-cut distinctions, first, between religion and the doctrines and rites which grow up around it, and second, between the religion of Jesus himself and that which centers in reverence for his person, and for both of these contributions to discriminative thinking he deserves the eternal thanks of mankind. Yet his romanticism and his vast capacity for seeing values in everything human, beautiful and necessary as these qualities are, allowed free play to the enthusiasm which ends in delusion.

The fire of romanticism warmed a world which rationalism had frozen. Its coloured floodlights disclosed beauties which were invisible in the white light of reason, but they also distorted and discoloured what they revealed. Neither rationalism nor romanticism can claim a monopoly on the truth. The discoveries they made should be remembered to their credit and treasured for a future and more comprehensive synthesis.

III. CRITICAL IDEALISM

However great his contribution to philosophy and ethics, Kant made no contribution to biblical criticism or to the search for the historical Jesus. For him history was only a series of illustrations of the truths of reason. His inward and moral interpretation of the kingdom of God avoided millenarian fanaticism by a detour which merely led to otherworldliness of another kind. His attitude toward revelation and miracles was exactly that of Lessing. Fichte and he agreed, to be sure, that "faith in a revelation could not reasonably be based upon a faith in miracles."⁴ Yet Lessing, Kant, and all who followed

⁴*Kants Briefwechsel*, 2d ed. (Akad. d. Wiss.), 1922, II, 317, 321. *Fichte's Briefwechsel*, 2d ed., ed. Schultz, 1930, I, 217 ff.

them could accept the vicious principle of accommodation, which is usually associated with the name of Lessing's enemy, Semler. Though miracles and fulfilled prophecy proved nothing to wise men, they might be necessary to convince the multitude. Jesus, his disciples, and God Himself were supposed, not merely to condescend to primitive man's low intellectual level and speak to him in the simple terms suited to his immaturity, but actually to stoop to deceit and falsehood in order that he might be led to the truth and the right. God's prophet became an old nurse who tells ghost stories to frighten children into good behaviour. Superstition of every kind might be defended because it keeps the "common people" in order.⁵

Thus Lessing's conception of the New Testament as a product of its times was not really grasped, just as his other idea that history is God's education of the human race was still smothered under the current conception of an objective revelation handed down from heaven. The mistake was made because the problem was viewed from the side of God, about which we know nothing, not from the side of man, about which we know little enough, but something.

Fichte, outdoing Kant, made a powerful contribution to two tendencies which stood directly in the way of search for the historical Jesus and which, for a generation after his lectures on "The Way towards the Blessed Life" were delivered (1806), operated to turn the enterprise in the wrong direction. He strongly encouraged the prevalent attitude, seen in Herder and Schleiermacher, which set the mystical fourth Gospel high above the others. His evaluation of ultimate, or metaphysical, truth as alone worthy of attention along with his depreciation of history as of no real importance was exactly the attitude which passed from Hegel to Strauss and was the germ of the *Leben Jesu*.

Worst of all, unlike Ernesti and Semler, none of the great

⁵See above, pp. 31 f.

philosophers of the period understood the basic principle of historical interpretation as Herder had intuitively grasped it, and as Wolf and Niebuhr were beginning to apply it, the principle that ancient writers must be taken as they intended their contemporaries to understand them. With supreme self-confidence, the philosophers, like the theologians, naïvely or willfully read back into Jesus' words the whole religious and moral content of their philosophies, and, not infrequently, made him merely an eighteenth-century philosopher. He, the perfect incarnation of reason, could not but think as they did. Kant did not pretend that he was giving the original intention of the authors, but merely the interpretation which was morally valid. "The faith of the church (which included the Bible) has as its highest interpreter pure religious faith" (which was Kant's).⁶ In other words, the actual doings and sayings of the historical Jesus are of no interest. Sovereign disdain for history in general and the historical Jesus in particular could hardly go farther. Kant was both honest and intelligent, but his principle, if adopted, would be more subversive of historical study than the muddle-headed allegorizing which believes that it is truly discovering the original intention of the Scripture writers. For the true Kantian, the historical Jesus had neither value nor meaning.

IV. ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

In this regard Hegel was a true successor of Kant and Fichte. One of the most interesting and self-revealing documents of Hegel's youth is the rationalistic, Kantian life of Jesus which he wrote during four months (April-July) in 1795. However, it was not published until 1907, and has exercised no influence on the search for the historical Jesus. Hegel's Kantian period, indeed, was short. After he had developed his own philosophy

⁶*Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, title of section III, i, 6.

of absolute idealism he never returned to the search for the historical Jesus. Such a task became meaningless. Jesus was the God-man, Spirit objectifying itself in humanity. If idea, or spirit, or reason is the only reality, if all that is real is reasonable and all that is reasonable is real, then history becomes, as with Kant and Fichte, only a source of illustrations of the truths of reason. Absolute idealism loses itself in complete relativism. If spirit, or reason, objectifies itself in history, then history must be cut down to the measure of reason. Neither history nor revelation has independent value. This was the logic which Strauss applied to the stories of Jesus' life and to the reconstruction of Christian theology.

If nature and history alike are only temporary and inadequate representations of eternal truth, Christianity, although it is the absolute religion, is not so in its historical forms, but only in its ideational content. Hegel and his school could speak of every Christian doctrine and of the stories in the Gospels as true, for in each the ingenious Hegelian imagination could discover an eternal idea (*Begriff*) behind the historical concept, or representation (*Vorstellung*). Upon these premises Feuerbach could abandon Christianity; Bruno Bauer, the Dutch radical school, and, more recently, Arthur Drews could deny the historicity of Jesus but maintain the dogmas of "rational" Christianity.

The Fichtean-Hegelian dialectic, which saw in all history an endless repetition of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, has had an equally definite and far-reaching influence. For Ferdinand Christian Baur and his Tübingen school, it became the framework on which the history of the Christian church was built and by which the dates of the New Testament documents were determined. Karl Marx applied the same dialectic to the history of economics to develop his dogma of economic determinism, which has had fully as disastrous practical consequences as any of the leftward movements in theology. Thus

Hegelianism, with its imposing philosophy of history, actually pointed away from scientific history, for it emphasized the idea, not historical fact.

Schelling is a figure even more pathetic than Strauss. He was another Swabian whose youth promised everything but whose maturity produced nothing but promises. Down to his death he was still working on the system which would finally and forever reconcile religion and philosophy. In the heyday of his youth and fame, like Lessing, Fichte, and Hegel, he had worshipped at the shrine of the "One-and-All" of Spinoza, seen in nature in one aspect, in "Christian mythology" as history and providence, and therefore as an eternal incarnation. Thus in his earlier, "negative" period, he was an outstanding example of Heine's famous saying that the hidden religion of Germany was pantheism. In his "positive" period, which began as early as 1809, he passed through an orthodox, pietistic, and revivalistic phase to a mystical theosophy. For a decade and a half, the slow and massive Hegel completely overshadowed him. But he kept alluding to the new philosophy in which he would solve all problems to the satisfaction of both theologian and philosopher. At length, ten years after Hegel's death, he was called to Berlin "to combat the dragon seed of Hegelian pantheism." He failed completely as a public lecturer and shortly retired, ostensibly to produce the long-promised philosophy.

In 1851, only three years before his death, a pious French visitor described "the beautiful and tranquil expression of his countenance" and "the limpid depth of his blue eyes under a massive forehead crowned with white." In reply to a question he said that "he had been engaged for many years on a work designed to exhibit the harmony of revelation and philosophy and thereby to give the key to the latter." Asked "what the principle and, so to speak, the dominant note of this harmony would be," he rose, took from his shelves an

old copy of the Greek New Testament, and opened it to Romans 11:36, "Of him (God) and through him and unto him are all things." Simply and earnestly he said, "This is the foundation and the last word of philosophy. It is the Holy Scripture which gives them to us."⁷ The old man, still pantheistic to the core, sent the conservative visitor away satisfied that philosophy had been converted to orthodoxy. His posthumous work, edited by his son, did nothing to solve the riddle of the universe. It satisfied neither philosopher nor theologian, neither pietist nor dogmatist. But the claims he had so often made in both spoken and printed work did not a little to encourage the reactionary and obscurantist tendencies of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

V. SCHLEIERMACHER AND MYSTICAL IDEALISM

Of a very different kind was the contribution of Hegel's great rival, Schleiermacher, one of the most amazing and attractive characters of modern times. Among the men who determined the direction of thought at the time when Strauss's *Leben Jesu* appeared, Hegel himself not excepted, none was greater. His enemies even tried to make him responsible for Strauss. Since the publication of his *Discourses on Religion for the Educated Among Her Despisers* in 1799 and his *Soliloquies* in 1800, few persons in Germany had exercised so wide an influence on all departments of life and thought. He had rescued Strauss and his friends from the fogs of mysticism, "magnetism," and "somnambulism." He had saved the reactionary Klaus Harms and others like him from unbelief. Not only did men like Neander, Alexander Schweizer, Nitzsch, Twesten, Julius Müller, and Ullman follow his leadership, but many of other tendencies acknowledged their debt

⁷*Revue chrétienne*, IX (Oct., 1862), 657 f. (A. Eschenauer); cf. *Theol Eclectic*, I (1863), 21 f.

to the great preacher. At Berlin, in the closing decade of his life, Hegel eclipsed him in the eyes of many beside the youthful Tübingen tutor, Strauss. For two or three decades following their death Hegel exerted a far greater influence. But beginning with the centenary of his birth, in 1868, Schleiermacher has come to occupy an ever larger place in Christian thought.

He was the son of an earnest and orthodox Reformed preacher and a gifted and deeply religious mother. He combined the mysticism and enthusiasm of the Moravians, the rationalism of Christian Wolff, the critical philosophy of Kant, the philological and literary criticism of Friedrich August Wolf, the historical criticism of Niebuhr, and the romanticism of Henriette Herz, Dorothea Veit, and the brothers Schlegel. He was a brilliant preacher and writer, a penetrating interpreter and scholarly translator of Plato, a practical man of affairs, and above all a man of great personal charm and of unbounded energy and devotion. A small, almost misshapen body was no handicap to one of the most engaging and powerful personalities of the age in which he lived.

Combining critical philosophy with the pietism which nature and nurture had made one of the fixed points of his character, Schleiermacher found the essence of religion, not in "feeling" as ordinarily understood, but in the sense of relationship with God. In the nature of the case, then, it could not depend upon historical records. Miracle could not prove its truth. Disputations over miracles and revelations were absurd. Religion, said Schleiermacher, "leaves physics, and, please God, psychology, untouched." Much piety may be had without miracle, inspiration, revelation, or spiritual communication. Every finite thing is a sign of the Infinite. Miracle is simply the religious name for an event. The more religious you are, the more miracle you will see everywhere. Every new and original communication of the universe to man is a reve-

lation. Inspiration is simply the general expression of the feeling of true morality and freedom. Every religious anticipation of the half of a religious event, one half being known, is prophecy. The man who does not see miracles of his own, receive his own revelation, and feel the divine Spirit in himself has no religion. No matter how glorious a sacred writing, belief in it does not make a man religious, but only a "lively and immediate understanding of it," so independent that he who thus understands needs no Scripture.⁸

Schleiermacher followed Hegel in making history the very essence of revelation. It is "the great and most general revelation of the deepest and holiest. In this sense . . . religion begins and ends with history. Prophecy and history are for religion the same and indistinguishable."⁹ At the same time Schleiermacher is at one with Lessing and Kant in their rejection of history as proof of truth, a fact which many who have quoted the above saying have not noticed. "The finest and tenderest in history," in other words, the religious element, cannot be communicated scientifically, but is intuitively comprehended by the religious mind. Schleiermacher fully believed that God is to be seen in nature and in man, in science and in history. But religion does not depend upon either the facts or the records of history. Lessing's blow to historical Christianity left Schleiermacher absolutely untouched, since, for him, religion consisted only in the response of the religious nature to the God who works in nature, in man, and in history. Even "the appearance of the Redeemer in history, as divine revelation, is neither an absolutely supernatural nor an absolutely suprarational thing." When we ascribe special inspiration to outstanding heroes, "this is what is meant: that . . . they have been quickened and inspired from the universal fountain of

⁸*Ueber die Religion, Sämmtl. Werke* (1835), I, 1, 247-52, 277 f., note 16; E. T., by Oman, pp. 87-92. (Ed. Leisegang, 94-98.)

⁹*Ibid.*, 238; E. T., 80. (Leisegang, 85.)

life." The incarnation, therefore, is not supernatural, but a part of the total process of natural law.¹⁰

Schleiermacher, then, in spite of his profoundly religious point of view, or rather just because of it, showed himself far more clear-minded, consistent, and courageous than the philosophers who preceded him. To Strauss he appeared illogical and mercurial just because the rich endowments of his many-sided nature enabled him to discover in the story of Jesus values which others could not appreciate. He conceived much more truly the real meaning of both natural law and religion, and therefore he saw that neither contradicts the other. Unlike Hegel, he produced no system, just because he kept close to the facts of human experience and did not "freeze his brain in abstract ice." While his pietism led him astray in his use of the Gospels, his critical keenness kept him close to the path of science. He was moving distinctly in the direction of modern critical, historical research. But he was a half century beyond his age.

VI. BIBLICISM AND RATIONALISM

Two types of supernaturalism were current. The attitude of Strauss and Baur to the older of these, "biblicism," illustrates how poorly the keenest minds often appreciate the strength of the traditional undercurrents of contemporary thought. In Württemberg, J. A. Bengel (1687-1752), F. C. Oetinger (1702-82), and men of their stamp had made pietistic biblicism thoroughly at home. It was based upon a full acceptance of the verbal, or at least the plenary, inspiration of the Scriptures, and one of its characteristic tenets was millenarianism. In 1843, largely through the efforts of Baur himself, biblicism was called to Tübingen in the person of Johann Tobias Beck (1804-78), Strauss's doughty opponent, who, within a decade

¹⁰*Christliche Glaube*, 13, 1 f.; *Sämmtl. Werke*, III, 78-83; E. T., Mackintosh and Stewart, Edinburgh, 1928, pp. 62-68.

or two, became more influential than Baur himself. A decade later Philip Schaff, himself not too orthodox for American Reformed churches, rejoiced over the domestic infelicities of Strauss and the academic troubles of Vischer, Zeller, and Schweigler and boasted that

"The period of false philosophy and theology may be said to have passed for Tübingen and Württemberg. . . . Dr. Baur, the patriarch of the hypercritical 'Tübingen school,' the most earnest and learned of them all, is declining in influence as he advances in age. The most popular professor of theology now is his complete antipode, Dr. Beck."¹¹

A man of marked individuality, of the Old Testament prophetic type, Beck's uncompromising courage, his thorough sincerity, his strong personality, and his powerful preaching gave his teaching the widest influence. For him the kingdom of God was in heaven, whence it worked upon sinful men. Thence it would eventually come in visible form. Since it was purely transcendent and suprahistorical, men could do nothing to hasten its coming. Consequently Beck opposed all efforts at social betterment through either home or foreign missions. His only concession to modern science was the abandonment of the primitive Lutheran idea of the verbal inspiration of the sacred writings for the divine inspiration (*Theopneustie*) of the writers. The sole task of the theologian was to systematize and apply the biblical teachings by means of inspired (*pneumatische*) exegesis.

Striking portraits of Baur and Beck hang side by side in the New Testament seminar room in the recently rebuilt university building at Tübingen. Baur is not so stiff and awkward as he is in some of his portraits, but he is vital, vigorous, stern, and precise. Beck is kindly, almost smiling, and a little flabby. His Geneva bands hang slightly awry, while Baur's fall straight and trim. The difference is typical.

¹¹*Germany*, pp. 100 f. See above, p. 7.

Biblicism lived on after Beck in his somewhat more liberal successor, Robert Benjamin Kübel (1838-94), and in a multitude of preachers and laymen. And it still lives in many who share its reverential conservatism toward the Scriptures without accepting its full consequences. In the postwar period, the idea of God-inspired exegesis, with all its opportunities for obscurantist dogmatism, has been revived in Germany. A century ago, apparently neither Strauss nor Baur felt any distinct apprehension as to the influence of this type of supposedly obsolescent doctrine. Yet it still stands as the greatest obstacle to a genuine portrayal of the historical Jesus.

On the other hand one of Strauss's pet aversions was the rationalistic supernaturalism of the "old Tübingen school." Its founder had been Gottlob Christian Storr (1746-1805). Its last confessed representative was J. C. Friedrich Steudel (1779-1837), teacher of Strauss and Baur, but it has lived on under other names, or more often without a name. Its essential characteristic was that, like English antideistic apologetics, it attempted to defend supernaturalism with the weapons of rationalism. It tried to use Kant's epistemology to defend the church doctrine of revelation. As Schelling wrote in his youth, it had made a wonderful brew out of the mixture. As Vischer later put it, it was a supernaturalism which carried in its own bosom the asp of rationalism. It was purely polemical and almost completely lacking in either originality or constructive ability. Little wonder that it did not satisfy the inquiring minds of Hegel and Schelling in Storr's day, nor of Strauss, Vischer, and Zeller in the last years of Steudel!

Along with supernaturalism, rationalism was also one of Strauss's pet aversions. It had murdered supernaturalism and supposedly committed virtual suicide long before Strauss and Baur came upon the field of controversy. Kant had given it the *coup de grâce* and romanticism had buried it without flowers or tears. But, even now, its ghost still walks. Its best

exponent in the early nineteenth century was the famous Heidelberg New Testament scholar, Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851), whose books were usually as long as his name and his life. In 1835 he was a strange survival from a past age. As Strauss expressed it, he had established his reputation as a Christian Euhemerus in 1800 by his commentary on the Gospels. His *Life of Jesus*, published in 1828 in four volumes of nearly thirteen hundred pages, confirmed his renown for unwieldy learning, useless ingenuity, and ridiculous bad taste.

As to his chief preoccupation, the miraculous, he started from a sound basic idea. He insisted that "God is always in nature." What was related in the Bible as miracle was only the work of the divine hand misunderstood. If the scholar searched long and far enough, he would be able to find some perfectly natural explanation for every supposed wonder. "The miraculous in Jesus is himself." The miracle stories, he said, should not occupy the attention. Yet his laboured explanations of them left no room for interest in Jesus. They were often more wonderful than the story. For example, the idea that Jesus walked on the sea was due to a mistranslation of the Hebrew preposition '*al*', which here should be rendered, not by *e**pi*, "upon," but *p**ara*, "beside."¹²

Paulus' worst offense was his broadly hinted explanation of the birth of Jesus. The annunciation to Mary could not have been made by an angel, since such beings are not, but must have come from some person, sent by Elisabeth, who allowed Mary to regard him as Gabriel. Bad taste and unwarranted inference could hardly go farther than to explain Jesus' birth by a pious fraud and seduction instigated by Mary's older kinswoman.

The problem as to the relation of the facts of history to eternal truth, the problem as to how the Scriptures reveal God,

¹²*Memorabilien*, VI (1794), 70-83.

did not trouble Paulus in the least. For Paulus it was laudable evidence of German keenness that all parties could go back to seek the essentials of original Christianity in Jesus' life and teaching. . . . The foundation of original Christianity is in its history.¹³ Being satisfied that he knew beyond the peradventure of a doubt exactly what the historical facts were, Paulus felt that his faith was sure. He believed only what was worthy of belief, for he had discovered the complete agreement of pure, original Christianity with what reason infallibly recognized as true. Apparently the meaning of the facts did not matter. Such was rationalism in 1828. It had long ago shot its bolt.

The methods and results of Paulus were equally unacceptable to Strauss and to the conservatives. In 1831 Edward Robinson wrote that Paulus was "a man of taste and genius, but one of the leading rationalists of the day; who, at the age of threescore years and ten, seems daily more zealous to destroy the faith of Christian believers."¹⁴ In 1857 Philip Schaff described him as "the notorious Paulus, who resembled much more the persecuting Saul than the converted Paul," and who "lived to see himself buried along with his deistic infidelity and that not only by the better spirit of the age, but also by another infidel, Dr. Strauss, who built his *Leben Jesu* on the ruins of Paulus' work on the subject."¹⁵ Both Robinson and Schaff are unfair in their estimates of Paulus' intentions and Schaff uses his epithets of aversion without due discrimination, but he is perfectly right as to Strauss's attitude toward Paulus. If anything, Strauss preferred the honest credulity of conservatism to the manifest evasions and intellectual insineries of Paulus' interpretations.

¹³*Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums*, Heidelberg, 1828, I, 1, pp. 80 ff.; pp. v and ix.

¹⁴*Biblical Repository*, I (Jan., 1831), 33.

¹⁵*Germany*, p. 92.

VII. THE DIALECTIC OF HISTORY IN JUDGMENT ON HEGELIANISM

The scene for the beginning of the search, then, was determined by the various philological, theological, and philosophical approaches to the problems of history and revelation made during the previous century. It actually was dominated by the inherited dogmatisms of otherworldly pietistic, supernaturalistic biblicism, rationalistic supernaturalism, and pure rationalism. Schleiermacher's contribution was beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries, and, because it seemed to smack of both pietism and rationalism, it became anathema to Strauss. For twenty-five years after his death Hegel dominated progressive theology in Germany, while the views which the Hegelians rejected dominated the churches and average theology.

On that November day when Strauss left Schleiermacher's presence to mourn for Hegel, his own fate was decided and with it the direction which the search for the real Jesus should first take was determined. The direction was totally wrong. Hegel mapped out a track which seemed clear and unmistakable. But he was a myopic philosopher, nothing more. Schleiermacher, artist, preacher, churchman, philologist, theologian, historian, and philosopher, could not quite see his way through the forest of obstacles, for he could see so much more. Lessing, Herder, and Schleiermacher, who were not mere theorists and whose sympathies were wide and keen, had almost discovered the proper philosophical basis for the search, but they lacked dogmatic certainty. They were seeking a true conception of historical method, but they were confused by the very breadth of their sympathies.

Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Ferdinand Christian Baur chose to follow the clear cold light of Hegel, rather than the warm, sometimes dazzling, sometimes smoking and flaring torch of

Schleiermacher. Each illustrates a different application of Hegelian principles to history, a different understanding of the budding science of history, and a different use of historical method. The direction which each of the three took was determined less by reason and logic than by reaction against prevailing conceptions of Jesus and of the records of his life. As Strauss and Ferdinand Christian Baur saw their problem, it was determined by the utter failure of the prevailing methods of interpreting Jesus to satisfy the inquiring mind. One road was taken by conservative, pietistic supernaturalism, quite another by rationalism, the self-styled science of its time. "In between, in the misty flats," the mediating school "groped to and fro." Each was unable to convince the others, because none was based upon a proper understanding of the problem. All must first be proved wrong, so the progressive spirits held, and a new synthesis constructed upon a "critical" basis, that is, according to the Hegelian philosophy of history. What Hegelianism achieved remains to be discussed in the three subsequent chapters.

PART II

A FALSE START, LED BY PHILOSOPHY
INSTEAD OF SCIENCE

SUMMARY

IV. The crude rationalistic explanation of Jesus as a reforming revolutionist suggested by Reimarus obscured the fact that Reimarus' view of the story of Jesus was actually that of a historian. Strauss, instead, looked at it as a philosopher. Utilizing current methods of eliminating myth from history, he studied, not the documents, but the underlying traditions, and used the historical data which survived his tests for a philosophical reconstruction of Christian doctrine, not for a historical account of Jesus. He applied historical method only in part. His reconstruction was dominated by Hegelian philosophy, not by scientific method. Therefore, he obscured, instead of clarifying, the historical figure.

V. Of the alternatives remaining to Hegel's followers after Strauss's destructive criticism, the Hegelian left, represented by Bruno Bauer, by the Dutch radical critics, and, more recently, by J. M. Robertson, William Benjamin Smith, Arthur Drews and Paul Louis Couchoud, chose the path of historical skepticism and philosophical reconstruction. Misled by the theological ideas which primitive Christianity adopted from Jewish and pagan mythologies to interpret Jesus, they argued that he never existed, but was the fictitious incarnation of a dying and rising saviour-god who was already worshipped in pre-Christian times. New Testament scholars have shown that their methods of argumentation are unscientific and their data insufficient, while, outside the New Testament, there is meager but satisfactory evidence for the existence of Jesus.

VI. On the other hand, Baur and the Tübingen school chose the path of historical criticism and philosophical reconstruction on the basis of the Fichtean-Hegelian dialectic of thesis—antithesis—synthesis. They eliminated much that was unhistorical, *e.g.*, the miracles and the fourth Gospel, but the resulting portrait of Jesus was not historical but philosophical. Jesus was actually an idea, not a living person. True historical method was still to be developed.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTRIBUTION OF STRAUSS HEGELIANISM OBSCURES THE HISTORICAL JESUS

I. HISTORICAL CRITICISM BEFORE STRAUSS AND BAUR

UNTIL Strauss's time only Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), professor of Oriental languages in the Johanneum at Hamburg, had made a truly historical approach to the study of Jesus.¹ The works which the Hamburg professor published show him to have been a disciple of Christian Wolff and a confirmed rationalist. The unpublished manuscript from which Lessing selected the famous Wolfenbüttel Fragments went much farther than the public was prepared to follow. So Reimarus had suspected and, crypto-rationalist that he was, did not publish these, his inmost convictions. The event proved his suspicion right. Consistently eliminating miracle and the supernatural, or suprahistorical, from the forces at work in Jesus' life, he attempted to discover historical causes which might account for the recorded developments. His psychological preparation and his historical method were not equal to the task, but his purpose and procedure were based upon a proper conception of history and were substantially correct. In this he was far ahead of his contemporaries, and, although

¹Lessing, *Sämmtliche Schriften*, ed. Lachman-Munker, Leipzig, 1897, XIII, 221 f., 269-80.

he owed much to the English deistic critics, Bolingbroke, Collins, Toland, Mandeville, and Peter Arnet, still Albert Schweitzer was justified in placing him at the head of the long list of modern searchers for the historical Jesus. Lessing's publication of the *Fragments* raised a mighty storm, but Strauss and other critics of his period learned much from the "Fragments Controversy" and from Reimarus.

There were no other direct predecessors. Ernesti and Semler were philologists rather than historians. Strauss and Baur were right in saying that Herder, Lessing, Griesbach, Eichhorn, De Wette, Gieseler, and all the rest of their predecessors had not applied consistent principles of criticism to the Gospels. Kant had not even claimed to seek the historical Jesus. His "moral interpretation" blandly read eighteenth-century ethics into the words of the first-century Teacher. A true historical search was equally far from Hegel's mind. His youthful, unpublished sketch of Jesus' life and teachings and the later accounts which he introduced into his various books and lectures were in no sense critical history. They were merely efforts of "reason," Hegel's reason, to find in the biblical records what seemed reasonable—to Hegel. The same may be said of Fichte and Schelling. German idealism was woefully lacking in a sense for critical history. For it criticism meant philosophical analysis.

With Strauss and Baur, although the old philosophical conception of criticism was explicitly dominant, a new attitude began to appear. They partially understood what historical criticism was doing to the records of Greece and Rome, and they were sufficiently emancipated from false ideas of inspiration and revelation to have no hesitation about applying the current scientific methods, as they understood them, to the Gospels. It was a strange mixture of historical criticism and philosophical analysis.

II. STRAUSS'S THEORY OF MYTH

Strauss's "critical examination" of the records of Jesus' life contains so much that is valuable, in spite of his shortcomings, that he is worth what may seem a disproportionate amount of space. As every scientific student will, either explicitly or implicitly, Strauss began his life of Jesus with a discussion of the "different modes of explaining the sacred histories" which his predecessors had followed. Aside from the naïve credulity which asks no questions, he discovered two chief methods of interpretation, supernaturalistic allegorism and rationalistic Euhemerism. The latter method regarded the events described in ancient tradition and sacred writings as having happened naturally. The supposedly divine or semidivine beings who appear were in reality humans. Rationalism, as seen in Eichhorn and Paulus, accepted the Euhemeristic idea, but regarded the Jewish and Christian heroes as great and good men who could not have been impostors or deceivers. Such a "natural" method of interpretation involved dating the writings as near as possible to the events narrated and inevitably fell into numerous inconsistencies and other difficulties.

Having demonstrated to the satisfaction of himself—and of any unprejudiced reader—that none of these methods was practicable, Strauss proceeded to show how Old Testament scholars, such as Eichhorn, G. L. Bauer, Ammon, De Wette, and others, had been forced by the logic of the data and the progress of modern ideas to regard much of the Old Testament as myths. He then went on to prove that it was equally difficult to interpret the New Testament without making the same admission. It is not at all strange that Strauss should have hit upon such an idea. The subject was "in the air." Jacob Grimm was collecting German myths. Baur had written on *Symbolism and Mythology* ten years before. It is strange that Strauss does not refer to the book nor to the works of either

Niebuhr or Ranke, of whom he could not have been ignorant. A closer acquaintance with them would have served his purpose better than the voluminous excerpts from the student notebooks of Hegel's lectures, with which he occupied his one winter in Berlin, for he was essaying a historical, not a philosophical, task. But he was not aware of this weakness in his approach.

However, he did use standard works on mythology. He quotes Christian Gottlieb Heyne (1729-1812), the founder of the scientific treatment of Greek mythology, for the mistaken principle that "all primitive history as well as philosophy comes from myths." Works of Schelling, G. L. Bauer, Gabler, Vater, De Wette, and others are cited. Strauss did not by any means claim to be applying a new idea or a new method to the New Testament. One of the richest arsenals for his battle he found in Karl Otfried Müller's *Prolegomena to a Scientific Mythology* (1825).² Müller's keen analysis of the true characteristics of myth assisted him greatly in setting up criteria for the evaluation of the Gospel narratives.

III. CRITICISM APPLIED TO THE GOSPELS

Strauss's chief contribution lies in his effort to prove that the concept of myth is to be applied to the New Testament. He went to others, such as Eichhorn, for arguments against the "natural," that is the rationalistic, method of interpreting the Gospel miracles. We cannot, he maintains, disentangle the natural from the supernatural in the ancient narratives unless we have a parallel account without supernatural colouring. Such we do not have for the Gospels. Thus he prepared for his inexorable, but fallacious dilemma, either supernatural or mythical.

To prove his thesis he must first make clear what myth is. This he did much more fully in his second edition. He dis-

²Used first in Strauss's second edition, 1837.

tinguished three kinds: *historical* myths, that is narratives of real events coloured by the intrusion of the supernatural; *philosophical* myths, that is stories which clothe an idea in the garb of history; and *poetical* myths, those which combine the historical and the philosophical and embellish the idea or fact with a veil of fancy. The true myth, following a distinction emphasized by Otfried Müller (and recently revived by form history), was a social product. In the mind of an individual, but without his conscious composition or invention, various current ideas shaped themselves into a story which was essentially a product of the community and represented ideas of the community. That is to say, there was no conscious deception in the construction of a true myth. As Müller put it,

"If one who invents the myth is only obeying the impulse which acts also upon the minds of his hearers, he is but the mouth through which all speak, the skillful interpreter who has the address first to give form and expression to the thought of all."³

Among the early Christians, according to Strauss, all of the conditions were favourable for the creation of just such myths out of the ideas of the Old Testament. Granted what the early Christians believed, that Jesus was the messiah, he would inevitably be clothed in their minds with the characteristics which the mythopœic invention of the Hebrews had ascribed to their prophets, and, therefore, one might expect the myths of the Old Testament to be repeated or reflected in the New. Derivation from the Old Testament was Strauss's key to the criticism of the Gospel incidents.

How, now, shall the historical in the Gospels be separated from the mythical? In the Gospels Strauss distinguished *pure* myth, in which the myth constitutes the substance of the narrative, and *historical* myth, in which a definite individual fact has been coloured by conceptions due to the religious imagina-

³*Leben Jesu*, I, 87 f., E. T., 81.

tion and derived from the messianic idea. In addition there are *legendary elements* due to mistakes and misconceptions arising in the course of oral transmission, and there are *editorial* additions. The laws by means of which the various unhistorical elements may be disentangled from the true historical facts were various:

(1) A narrative cannot be true if it contradicts the known and universal laws which govern the course of events. Such laws are as follows: The Absolute Cause does not disturb the chain of secondary causes by arbitrary interpositions. All events must follow a certain law of succession, *e.g.* a babe does not attract the same attention as a man. The ordinary psychological laws that govern human feelings, reason, and memory must be observed.

(2) A narrative, if true, must be consistent within itself, and not in contradiction to other true accounts of the same event.

(3) Certain positive features mark a narrative as fictitious or legendary, such as the use of poetical language by the uneducated in ordinary conversation, the appearance in the narrative of certain ideas derived from preconceived opinions, and not from actual experience. For example, on this ground Strauss contended that "the home of Jesus' parents" was at Nazareth, "following Luke," not at Bethlehem, as stated by Matthew. When, therefore, the essential nature of an occurrence is either inconceivable or is in striking harmony with some messianic idea current in Jesus' day, then the whole alleged occurrence is unhistorical. When, however, the form only and not the general content of the narrative exhibits the character of the unhistorical, then it is possible to suppose that there is a kernel of historical fact. Recognizing the difficulty of applying these principles, Strauss undertook to proceed with all caution.⁴

⁴*Op. cit.*, 99-108, E. T., 87-92.

His caution seemed to his contemporaries the most outrageous audacity. What was new and disturbing in the *Leben Jesu* was not the application of the mythical principle, but the thoroughgoing and relentless logic with which Strauss plowed his way through the Gospel narratives, treating every detail in the light of previous discussion and of his own carefully framed principles of procedure. It is unnecessary to describe the outcome in detail. Having no fear for the principles of the Christian religion, which he believed his Hegelian logic competent fully to maintain whatever the outcome of his historical investigation, Strauss moved on, serene and unfaltering, while the whole structure of traditional Christianity fell like a house of cards. He left the fair fields of Gospel story in the condition of a California valley in the wake of a hydraulic gold dredger. He was at the moment bent, not on construction, but on destruction. His purely negative criticism, superior though it was to rationalism, could arouse only resentment in all those who were conservatively inclined. That the work was done with unequalled literary skill and lucidity of style only made his offence the worse.

IV. ATTEMPTS AT RECONSTRUCTION

Looking back over the wreckage which strewed the wake of his ruthless dredging, Strauss faced a last dilemma: What can the Christian preacher do? How can he continue in the ministry of the church when theology has reached this stage? The idealistic philosophy of Hegel easily suggested a point of view which Strauss found to be the satisfactory way out of this "last dilemma." To quote his paraphrase of Hegel:

"'The sensuous history of the individual is only the starting point for the mind.' Faith, in her early stages, is governed by the senses, and therefore contemplates a temporal history; what she holds to be true is the external, ordinary event. . . . But mind, having once taken occasion, by this external fact,

to bring under its consciousness the idea of humanity as one with God, sees in the history only the representation of that idea; the object of faith is completely changed; instead of a sensible, empirical fact, it has become a spiritual and divine idea, which has its confirmation no longer in history but in philosophy."⁵

It was on this foundation that Strauss attempted his reconstruction of the fallen edifice. In his "Concluding Dissertation," which followed his discussion of the ascension of Jesus, anticipating that his "audacious criticism" would cause Christian believers to "turn away in horror from so fearful an act of desecration," he sought to "re-establish dogmatically that which he had destroyed critically."⁶ Concisely but sympathetically describing "the Christology of the orthodox system," he acknowledged the tremendous satisfactions it had brought to believers, but found it inconsistent, irrational, and philosophically untenable. Following very largely the lines of Schleiermacher's criticism, he objected especially to the idea of two natures in one person as psychologically impossible. The Christology of rationalism, which regarded Jesus as a divine messenger, a special favourite and charge of the Deity, one whose example inspires men to virtue and invigorates moral courage, he found likewise unsatisfactory. For Spinoza, Kant, and De Wette Jesus was merely a highly distinguished person whose influence was so powerful that he had suggested to men the ideal, which, in truth, alone had power to become the positive basis of religion. Such a mere prophet, Strauss thought, could not have inspired the piety of the church, and, moreover, this Christology did not salvage the truth which lay in the traditional view, nor did it satisfy the demands of critical philosophy.

Schleiermacher's eclectic Christology, according to Strauss,

⁵*Op. cit.*, II, 711, E. T., 780 f.

⁶*Op. cit.*, II, 663-719, E. T., 757-784.

had attempted to combine supernaturalism with rationalism. Christ was a man, but an ideal man, ideal above all in his oneness with God. He was so related to the church that all who connect themselves with the church achieve oneness with God through him. Strauss found this view untenable. First, there were two scientific, that is philosophical, objections: on the one hand it was impossible that the absolute idea be realized in any individual; "the Idea loves not to pour all its fullness into one example"; and, on the other hand, it is "contrary to the laws of development to regard the initial member of a series as the greatest." Second, there were theological objections. Schleiermacher's Christology did not satisfy faith, for, aside from minor difficulties, since Jesus was a man, it rejected the resurrection and ascension, which traditional theology regarded as its foundation stone.

In two pages, with that conciseness and lucidity which clearly entitle him to "the unsolicited honour of being ranked as a . . . classical writer of prose," Strauss outlined his own "speculative Christology."⁷ It is impossible to compress his statement into a sentence or even a paragraph. It may best be described as a symbolical interpretation, much like those which he had just rejected. Indeed, he quotes both Kant and Hegel in support of it. The life of Jesus from his miraculous birth to his supernatural resurrection and ascension is explained as an allegory. "The incarnation of God is an incarnation from eternity," as Schelling had said. God and man are both of them Spirit and, therefore, essentially one. The Infinite has truth without reality, the finite reality without truth. Only as the Infinite reveals itself in the finite are truth and reality one. "The true and real existence of Spirit, therefore, is neither in God Himself, nor in man by himself, but in the God-man; neither in the Infinite alone, nor in the finite alone, but in the interchange of impartation and withdrawal between the

⁷*Op. cit.*, II, 704-7, E. T., 777 f.

two, which on the part of God is revelation, on the part of man religion." The story of Jesus' life is the symbolical account of these truths. In all of this Strauss merely re-echoes Hegel.

As to his "last dilemma," Strauss admits that criticism has left little of the historical person of Jesus. "Speculative Christology" finds him unnecessary. As Hegel had said, "The phenomenal history of the individual is only the starting point of the mind." No individual can represent the ideal in the sense of Hegelian metaphysics. The historical Jesus cannot be the ultimate ideal; as an individual he is an impediment rather than an aid to its realization.

The key to "speculative Christology" is to be discovered in the race. "The Idea loves not to pour all its fullness into one example, in jealousy of the rest. Only the race (*Gattung*, "genus") answers to the Idea." What the traditional accounts assert of Jesus Christ cannot be true of him as an individual; it cannot be true of any man, but it is true of mankind. "In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race, they perfectly agree." Strauss closes the section with a truly Hegelian aphorism: "Our age demands to be led in Christology to the idea in the fact, to the race in the individual."⁸

V. THE REMNANTS OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Actually Strauss left more of the historical Jesus than he admitted. He was far from denying his existence. He rejected much of the framework of the narrative, as De Wette had done, but Jesus' home in Nazareth, his baptism by John, his mission in Galilee, his claim to messiahship, his rejection at Nazareth and his cleansing of the Temple as narrated in Mark, his trial and crucifixion, all were historical. Strauss saw that for Jesus the kingdom and its coming were eschatological and

⁸*Op. cit.*, II, 710 ff., E. T., 780 f.

miraculous, not spiritual and evolutionary. Jesus faced death bravely, following what he believed to be his duty and trusting that good would be the eventual outcome.⁹

As Baur and many others have pointed out, Strauss discussed the narratives without attention to the prime requisite of scientific history, a systematic criticism of the documents which provided the accounts. His comparison and criticism of the narratives as demanded by the criteria which he had set up drove him to one useful conclusion. Where John could be compared with the Synoptics, the outcome was in most cases unfavourable to John, and more favourable to Matthew, although all four were regarded as predominantly mythical. But Strauss did not try to explain the relations of the Gospels one to another, nor to describe the process by which the tradition had taken shape. For this there was no excuse, since the problem was one which had been discussed continuously since the time of Lessing.

Making every possible allowance, then, for Strauss's sincerity and scholarship, one must, nevertheless, hold that he was not seeking the historical Jesus, but a group of theological, or perhaps better, philosophical, ideas. Sound as many of his historical judgments were, he who poured contumely on the rationalist was in fact a superrationalist, distinguished only by his greater consistency, in other words, ruthlessness. Scorning the unhistorical dogmatism of the supernaturalist, and posing as unprejudiced and open-minded, he was actually a thorough Hegelian dogmatist. He was not truly attempting to discover what Jesus as an actual historical character had been, nor what conception of religion he taught, but only how far Hegelianism might be read into the accounts of Jesus' life. He followed exactly in the footsteps of Hegel. He did just what he accused Kant of doing: "He derived those thoughts only from himself

⁹*Op. cit.*, I, 484-88, 521 f., 726-52, II, 306 ff., 324-56, E. T., 278 ff., 296, 399-412, 573, 582-98.

and the cultivation of his age."¹⁰ But he was worse than Kant, for he assumed that these thoughts had actually been intended by the authors of those writings.

Strauss's contribution was largely negative. It may be said that the noise he made while he blasted obstructions out of the path of progress frightened many prospectors back and the débris he left discouraged others. Who accomplishes the most, the loud-voiced, self-assertive, one-sided enthusiast, or the quiet, steady, undemonstrative toiler? The question usually defies answer, because, in any given case, it is never possible to know just what would have been the result if the alternative route had been chosen. At any rate, visible advance was made by others. Yet one can still honestly repeat what has been said about the service which he rendered to those interested in the search for the real Jesus. His mythical method, one-sided as it was, indeed just because it was one-sided, set all who wished to find the actual Jesus seeking for the right path which Strauss had missed, and, because he had done so much of the necessary negative, destructive clearing of the way, the path was easier to find.

As matters stood when Strauss published the fourth, definitive edition of his *Leben Jesu* in 1840, three paths stood open to a criticism which refused to follow the leading strings of biblicism and supernaturalism. (1) The destructive, mythical criticism of Strauss might be followed to its better end. (2) Literary and historical criticism might be undertaken on the assumptions of the Hegelian dialectic of history and philosophy of religion. (3) The New Testament documents might be subjected to literary and historical criticism such as was being applied to other historical documents by Niebuhr, Savigny, Ranke, and others, a criticism measurably free from any peculiar historical and theological prepossessions. As a matter of fact, these three paths were followed and it becomes the task

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, I, 26, E. T., 52; see above, ch. I, p. 18.

of this account to follow each of the paths mentioned: (1) that of those who denied the historicity of Jesus, (2) that of Baur and the "new Tübingen school," and (3) that which eventuated in "liberal" criticism. In following those who took the first and second paths it becomes necessary to presuppose some knowledge of those who took the third, since all three have been contemporaneous. But since the first two paths ended in blind alleys, it seems better to describe them before taking up the third.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRIST MYTH HEGELIANISM DENOUNCES THE QUEST

I. CHARACTER AND CAUSES OF THE MYTH THEORY STRAUSS REDIVIVUS

AT Easter time in 1909 a reincarnation of Strauss suddenly burst forth out of the sea of German philosophical speculation, like Triton blowing his horn to the storm winds. Arthur Drews' *Christusmythe*, although a work of infinitely less scholarship and acumen, attracted fully as much attention, for the time being, as Strauss's *Leben Jesu* had in its day. Upon its appearance, the "German Monist League" advertised the book by inviting Drews to address audiences in various German cities. Within a year the "League" arranged for two successive evening assemblies in the Zoological Garden at Berlin at which Drews appeared before vast audiences to argue his case with some of the leading scholars of Germany. A few days later Protestant groups called mass meetings in the Circus Busch and the Berlin Dom to combat the dangerous heresy. Kaiser Wilhelm gave the matter his personal attention. The newspapers were full of it. In other cities great public discussions were held. Innumerable articles appeared in periodicals. It seemed that every scholar in Germany who was even remotely connected with theology had to write a brochure with the title, "Did Jesus Ever Live?"

Drews suffered few of the disabilities and persecutions that hounded Strauss into unbelief. To be sure, he never rose higher than the post of "extraordinary professor" of philosophy, that is "lecturer," in the "college of Technology" at Karlsruhe. He failed of election in 1910 to the chair of philosophy at Bern, probably because of his "denial of Christ." Nevertheless, the discussion ran an entirely different course from that of the Straussian controversy. The reasons for this are to be sought in the progress of theological studies during the intervening seventy-five years. Drews found the way fully prepared for him by the historical criticism of the previous century.

In a very natural reaction against naïve credulity, the nineteenth century had found almost all of the records of the past undependable. Thus inevitably doubts were suggested as to the stability of the Bible as a foundation for religion. What Lessing and Kant had whispered in the inner chamber and with reservations, the Hegelian left wing, as represented by Strauss and others, had proclaimed from the housetops. Strauss was shouted down, but as time went on the apparently inextricable confusion of the New Testament critics, something of which will be noted later, the differences of opinion between those who accepted and those who rejected the fourth Gospel, the interminable debates over the Synoptic problem, such sharp divergences of judgment as, for example, that between Wrede and Schweitzer, all seemed to proclaim in no uncertain tone that, as Strauss had already maintained, no one could, in any case, know the truth about Jesus, and that records which were so uncertain in historical value and interpretation might well be fictitious. When a critic begins to "whittle down the records," where can he stop? The general tendency of the liberal "life-of-Jesus research" in the nineteenth century was to reduce the extent of the trustworthy records to a minimum.

While the literary and historical critics have given much aid and comfort to those who deny the historical existence of Jesus,

it is a significant fact that practically none of the deniers have been historians or theologians "by trade." The great majority of them have been honourable and conscientious men who were deeply interested in religion and who believed, as Strauss did, and as any reasonable person must, that the interests of religion are best served by eliminating all superstition and falsehood from religious faith. But it is fair to say that their appeal to history was secondary. They were not first convinced that the Jesus of the Gospels was a fiction. Having been convinced, sometimes by unfortunate personal experiences, sometimes by philosophical considerations, that Christianity was hopelessly entangled in superstition, dogmatism, ritualism, and ecclesiasticism, they have turned to history to prove that Jesus never existed, in order to destroy what they believed to be an incurably antireligious form of religion.

Arthur Drews (1865-1935), who is perhaps the outstanding representative of the denial of the historicity of Jesus in the twentieth century, is an excellent illustration of this fact. It would be extremely interesting and profitable to attempt to discover the personal idiosyncrasies and social influences which have determined the attitudes of those who have decided against the historicity of Jesus. In the case of Drews, as he himself tells the story, the first factor seems to have been an independent, critical, and deeply sincere mind, the second a youth spent in a home in which religion played practically no rôle. About him he saw outward conformity to custom, but disregard of the spirit of Christianity, accompanied often by outspoken un-Christian or antireligious ideas and feelings. In Kant, who was the philosophic fashion, he found no joy, and in his teachers of philosophy no interest in the problems of *Weltanschauung* which were troubling him. For a time he found help, but not satisfaction, in Schopenhauer. Then, almost by chance, he turned to Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, and it worked upon him "like a revelation."

Eventually he became interested in mythology and then in the problem of Jesus. Frazer's *Golden Bough* and the works of Winckler, Jeremias, Gunkel, Karl Vollers, von Hartmann, Kalthoff, and finally W. B. Smith prepared him for writing his *Christ Myth*. As a boy in the last year of the *Gymnasium* he had "gulped down Strauss's *Leben Jesu* with breathless tension," and the step to the denial of Jesus' existence cost him no pain, for he "had never felt himself 'overpowered by Jesus' personality.'" It is, therefore, perfectly just to say that in Drews' case it was disgust with formal, unethical, and insincere Christianity which made the fertile soil in which doubts of the existence of Jesus took root. His struggle against academic conventions may have sharpened his appetite for revolt against religious conventions. He says that, even after he wrote the *Christ Myth*, he was ready to be convinced that he was wrong. But it is clear that the heat of the fray, in which he lost what had seemed a certain call to a university chair, did not soften his negative opinion.

Drews' list of representatives of his way of thinking, his fore-runners and colleagues, establishes the fact that, not so much the want of historical evidence, as personal feeling and philosophical theory have influenced the deniers of Jesus' historicity. Men like Troeltsch, who did not dream of doubting the existence of Jesus, have been troubled by the problem of historicism. They have felt that the numerous uncertainties which every student must soon discover as to the life and teachings of Jesus make serious difficulties for faith, and they have sought to discover some construction of the data which would be historically and philosophically sound as well as religiously fruitful. Their opponents have approached the question from the other direction. They have denied the facts.

II. THE EARLIEST DOUBTS AND DENIALS

The English deists and the Continental "enlighteners" are to be credited with really beginning the attack on the historicity

of Jesus by their doubts as to the records of the miracles. Voltaire and Holbach carried it on. The first two men who definitely denied that Jesus had ever lived were the French traveller, politician, and philosopher, Constantin François Volney and the scholar, Charles François Dupuis. Their works made no little stir in their day in France and were translated, in whole or in part, into German and other languages. Professor Maurice Goguel of the Protestant theological faculty in Paris, without doubt the leading New Testament scholar in France today, believes that the irony of J. B. Pérès, who published a small volume showing how the same methods could be used to prove that Napoleon never existed, effectually prevented the spread of the mythological idea in France during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, and that Renan's easy and attractive account of the man Jesus continued the same service for two generations after his *Vie de Jésus* appeared.

The first man of real scholarship to deny Jesus' existence was Bruno Bauer (1809-82). His progress from conservatism to radicalism is instructive. At the beginning of his career he belonged to the Hegelian right, the group which interpreted Hegel in a sense favourable to Christian dogma. In 1835 and 1836 he reviewed Strauss unfavourably. But in 1839 he attacked the anti-Hegelian orthodoxy of Hengstenberg and was transferred by the government from Berlin to Bonn. Probably this punishment gave him a start on his way toward radicalism. From this time on he exhibited a growing skepticism, enhanced when he was deprived of his position at Bonn. When, in 1850-51, he put out a second, combined edition of works already published on John and the Synoptics, he was sure that Jesus was an invented figure. But this purely negative conclusion left the origin of Christianity entirely unexplained. This problem he eventually attempted to solve in his *Christ and the Cæsars, the Origin of Christianity out of Roman Hellenism (Griechenthum)*, which did not appear until 1877. The chief ideas of Christianity, so he

argued, came from Philo and Seneca. The Roman emperors, Augustus, Tiberius, and Marcus Aurelius, each had made a contribution, and all of this had been worked up late in the second century into the Gospel story of Jesus. Bruno Bauer outdid Ferdinand Christian Baur in transferring even Paul's four chief letters to the second century and thus placed all of the New Testament so far from the events it was supposed to record that there could be no thought of their historical dependability.

III. THE RADICAL DUTCH SCHOOL

Among German scholars Bauer found no followers. But the cudgels he laid down were taken up by a radical school of Dutch critics who constitute a unique phenomenon in the history of New Testament criticism.¹ Partially isolated by their national language, and therefore without influence or support from abroad, they maintained for a generation a remarkable course of radical criticism in spite of extremely conservative and contentiously orthodox groups within their own country. The first, Allard Pierson (1831-96), a bold but wandering spirit, resigned his pastorate in 1865 because his views were unorthodox, and thereafter held various nontheological professorships. None of the rest found themselves disturbed in their church relationships or their clerical or professorial positions, for their Hegelianism led them to insist that the denial of Jesus' historicity made it easy and reasonable for them to maintain orthodox Christian doctrines. They could speak of Jesus with all due reverence because they meant, not the Jesus of history, but the Christ of faith.

Nearly all of the leading Dutch radicals were men of originality, intellectual vigour, and very considerable scholarship.

¹In addition to Drews, Schweitzer, and the standard works of reference, I am indebted to Harry James Hager, *The Radical Dutch New Testament Critics*, Diss. Univ. of Chicago, 1933 (unpub.) and E. C. Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1924.

Abraham Dirk Loman (1823-97), professor in the Lutheran seminary at Amsterdam and a leading musician of Holland, emphasized the social origins and symbolical meanings of the Gospels. Samuel Adrian Naber (1828-1913), professor of classical philology in Amsterdam and editor of *Josephus*, and Pierson maintained the view that the Paul of Acts was historical but the epistles were forgeries. Gerardus Johann Bolland (1854-1922), professor of philosophy at Leiden, a passionate fighter, anti-Catholic, anti-Masonic, antidemocratic, a pronounced Hegelian, who made a profound impression by the vigour of his personality, adopted the chief "discovery" of the Christ-myth school, a supposed pre-Christian Joshua or Jesus cult. Willem Christian Van Manen (1842-1905), best known of the group through his contributions to Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica*, never came to a full denial of Jesus' historicity, although he abandoned the genuineness of Paul's letters. Wilhelm Brandt (1855-1915), famous for his pioneer Mandaean studies, believed early Christianity had contained gnostic ideas, and doubted the historicity of much of the Gospel story of Jesus. He was much quoted by the mythologues, but he did not doubt the existence of Jesus. The last of the school, G. A. Van den Bergh van Eysinga (b. 1874), has made their views known to the world in English and in German in his little volume, *Radical Views about the New Testament* (1912) and his *Pre-Christian Christendom* (Dutch, 1918).

Fortunately or unfortunately, their partial isolation, due to their language, allowed their unusual views to develop. It likewise has prevented them from influencing thought in the rest of the world. Apparently they were original in their arguments, except for the influence of Bruno Bauer, and also made no direct contribution to the origins of radicalism elsewhere, though eventually they gave and received welcome aid from J. M. Robertson in England, W. B. Smith in America, and Drews in Germany.

IV. ENGLISH AND AMERICAN RADICALISM

In Germany, as Drews admits, Dutch radicalism had little influence. He claims that it aroused attention in England. However, none of the authors he mentions has exercised any wide influence except John Mackinnon Robertson (1856-1933), the well-known Scotch rationalist, politician, and publicist. He was long a member of Parliament, travelled extensively, and wrote voluminously. *Christianity and Mythology* (1900), the title of his first attack on the historicity of Jesus, gives the key to his strategy. As Drews pointed out, "myth" meant to Robertson a "multiform mass of traditional error." Any ancient myth, legend, tradition, or cult rite which in any way offered an actual or symbolical parallel to Christian belief or practice could be taken by Robertson as evidence that the figure of Jesus was merely a fictitious combination of borrowed ideas. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1900) was for him a mine of treasures manifold. He adopted the idea of an Israelite Joshua cult. He believed that incidents from the lives of actual messianic pretenders may have found their way into the Gospels. He used some of the least trustworthy materials from the Talmud. But above all, Robertson exploited the mystery religions. The myths of the birth, death, and resurrection of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, and Dionysus furnished him with sufficient more or less close parallels to features of the Gospel story to convince him that his thesis was correct. Continuing his literary activity in this field after Drews began to write, in new editions or new works he utilized fresh arguments and tried to meet the objections of his opponents. His last work dealing with the subject was *Jesus and Judas* (1927).

For the English-speaking world, the work of William Benjamin Smith (1850-1934), professor of mathematics and later of philosophy in Tulane University at New Orleans, is to be put beside that of Robertson. From a scientific, if not from a popu-

lar, point of view, Smith goes beyond Robertson. His first publication, *The Pre-Christian Jesus* (1906), appeared in German under the sponsorship of Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel of Zürich, whose "foundation pillars" for belief in the historical Jesus as presented in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica* had aroused no little discussion. Like many others, Schmiedel insisted that, even without the historical Jesus, religion would continue, and, while dissociating himself from Smith's views, he held, as Lessing had in regard to Reimarus, and Neander in regard to Strauss, that Smith ought to be heard and honestly and scientifically answered. Smith argued that Apollos and the twelve disciples of Acts 19:1-17, who knew only the baptism of John, must have been worshippers of a pre-Christian Jesus, as were also Simon Magus of Samaria and Elymas bar-Jesus of Cyprus. By reinterpretations of "Nazarene," "Son of man," and other terms used in the New Testament, he found further support for his theories. In a second work, *Ecce Deus* (in German, 1911, E. T., 1912), he interpreted the Gospel narratives as merely symbolical and argued that, out of a misunderstanding of the mythical, symbolic saving god, Jesus, the historical person, had been manufactured.

Up almost until his death Smith continued to discover new details to add to his arguments and to publish articles, notably in the *Hibbert Journal*. Loisy, A. Kirchner, and others have aided and abetted him by discovering a close resemblance between the story of Jesus' death and the Babylonian myth of the "passion of Marduk." It was a strange error of the Bishop of Gloucester, Arthur C. Headlam, to suppose that Smith had any considerable following in America. The fact that Smith's books were published first in Germany and his articles chiefly in England should have warned him. Nor can America claim the honour of having first discovered the idea of a pre-Christian Jesus-cult.² That honour seems to belong to G. R. S. Mead, the

²Headlam, *Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, p. v; Case, *Historicity of Jesus*, p. 44, note 1.

English theosophist. Smith was merely the first to argue the supposition vigorously. Holland, Germany, and France are the countries which have chiefly championed the theory that Jesus was a myth.

V. THE CHRIST MYTH IN GERMANY

Drews insisted that in denying the historicity of Jesus he was supported by many who had already, in whole or part, proved him unhistorical or at least valueless for faith. Thus he claimed the support of Johannes Weiss and the school of thoroughgoing eschatology and the psychiatrists, such as Doctor Georg Lomer (de Loosten), Doctor Binet-Sanglé, and Emil Rasmussen. The Marxist theories of Albert Kalthoff and Karl Kautzsky, who explained Christianity as a social movement, the attenuated "liberal" portraits of Jesus, such as Gustav Frensen painted in *Hilligenlei* (1905), Peter Jensen's use of the Gilgamesh epic as the source of all the characters in the Bible, the Assyrian and Babylonian parallels gathered by Friedrich Delitzsch, Hugo Winckler, Alfred Jeremias, and Hermann Gunkel, parallels to Gospel stories and teachings gathered from Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, all these heterogeneous materials were grist to Drews' mill. Above all, supposed parallels from Greek and Oriental mystery religions presenting a dying and rising saviour-god were used with deadly effect in a land where orthodox mystical soteriology was far better known among the masses than the figure of Jesus as portrayed by the synoptic Gospels.

It was not at all strange, therefore, that Drews, with his *Christ Myth*, should become the sensation of the hour. Under the favourable circumstances, with the wide publicity given him by both friends and enemies, it could hardly have been otherwise. The idiocy—no other word is strong enough—of his opponents, especially the conservatives, makes one wonder that Christianity still lives. When supposed Christians in the twentieth cen-

tury will bring out a false inscription recording Jesus' conviction and false papyrus documents (the so-called Benan letters of Edler von der Planitz) to prove the existence of Jesus, the height of absurdity is reached.³ In 1910 Drews published the address which he had delivered at the famous debate in the Zoological Garden in Berlin under the title, "Did Jesus Ever Live?" and also a reworking of a chapter of the *Christ Myth* as "The Peter Legend." In 1911 the *Christ Myth* was published in English and in that year appeared also a reply to his critics which Drews entitled the *Christ Myth, Second Part*, in English, *The Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus* (1912?). There the matter rested until after the World War. After 1921 he published various new volumes and revisions of his earlier writings.

Drews was modest and honest enough to admit that William Benjamin Smith's *Pre-Christian Jesus* was the volume which consolidated his rising certainty and which led him to undertake to assemble all of the arguments and thus to settle the troublesome question as to the historicity of Jesus. The attention he received proves that he accomplished the task better than any one before him. To attempt here to summarize the *Christ Myth* and other books of Drews would be only to repeat with slight modifications the arguments against the historicity of Jesus which have already been mentioned and could not, in any case, adequately represent his work. It must be said to his credit that Drews learned from his opponents, and, in his successive publications, showed an increasing acquaintance with the literature of New Testament criticism and an enlarging grasp of his subject. Yet the fact remains, despite his repeated protests, that he was a dilettante in the field of ancient history and the history of religions and used his sources without adequate criticism.

³Drews, *Selbstdarstellung*, p. 111 (45); cf. E. J. Goodspeed, *Strange New Gospels*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931, pp. 73-84; Jülicher-Fascher in *Rel. in Gesch. u. Gegen.*, 2d ed., I, 886 ff.

Drews, Smith, and Robertson were not the only persons in this period who undertook to demonstrate that Jesus was a fiction. None, however, have made any new contribution and exercised any considerable influence, with one exception. The work of Georg Brandes, the well-known Danish *littérateur*, *Sagnet om Jesus* (1925), in English, *Jesus: a Myth* (1926), which was immediately translated into German and English, is at best only a skillful popularizing of Drews' arguments. That Drews could refer with approval to the wild etymologizing of Hermann Raschke's *The Workshop of the Gospel of Mark* (1924) only exhibits his philological and historical incompetence. Nothing is easier than to discover whatever meanings one will out of Semitic place names—if one ignores philological rules. By so doing Raschke discovered that nothing in Mark means what it is supposed to mean and that Marcion was the author of the Gospel. Nothing could more perfectly illustrate the work of an illogical dilettante, yet Drews seized upon it to bolster up his own dilettantism.

VI. RECENT FRENCH DENIALS

The chief source of fresh contributions to the controversy is the new school of mythologues in France. Their leader, a physician turned traveller, *littérateur*, archæologist, and theologian, M. Paul-Louis Couchoud, is more dilettante and less learned, but more positive and constructive than Drews. M. Goguel, speaking from personal acquaintance with M. Couchoud, praises him warmly for his "elevation of thought and profound sense of the spiritual values in Christianity" and for "his original and vigorous mind, highly distrustful of traditional opinions, fertile in ingenious combinations," but adds that he has "a predilection for bold hypotheses." He is "capable at times of neglecting part of the data of the problem under consideration," and he ignores all published criticism. A disciple of Anatole France, M. Couchoud is a charming writer and a persuasive

advocate. His *Sages and Poets of Asia* was published in a second edition in 1920. His *Benoit de Spinoza* (2d ed., 1924) was crowned by the French Academy.

His little volume, *Le Mystère de Jésus*, or *The Enigma of Jesus*, published partly in the *Mercure de France* in 1923 and 1924 and as a book in French and English in 1924, presents conclusions somewhat similar to those of Drews, with a minimum of argument and scholarly apparatus, but in most attractive popular form. Nietzsche had said that "a founder of a religion may be insignificant, a match, nothing more." Couchoud seeks the match and finds it, not in Jesus, but in Paul. It would have been impossible for Paul to have believed that one of his countrymen had become a god. Peter and Paul alike had visions in which a god appeared to them. It was in mystic visions that Jesus came to exist. He was only a new form of the Old Testament Yahweh.

Sir James Frazer, famous author of the *Golden Bough*, who wrote an introduction to the Rationalist Press Association's English translation of the work, found in this use of hallucination to explain the beginnings of Christianity the most original feature of the work. And in that he is doubtless right. The adroitness with which Couchoud avoids the difficulty of the Dutch and German radicals with the Pauline literature and turns the early date of Paul and a late date for the Gospels to the support of his argument is notable, although, like the vision theory, it is not entirely new.

As a charming bit of writing, M. Couchoud's work is beyond praise. As an argument, it has little weight. Indeed, he himself recognizes this and, in collaboration with others, is publishing a series of studies to explain the origins of Christianity. Up to date, the most important contributions are by others. M. Couchoud is able to pick up the apparatus of scholarship and use it effectively as a weapon, but hardly as a tool. Propaganda for the new cause is being presented in magazine articles and books

by Professor Prosper Alfarcic, of Strasbourg University, Robert Stahl, and Couchoud himself. Two works on the Gospel of Mark by Alfarcic (1929), one on the *First Writings of Christianity* (1930) by Stahl, Van den Bergh van Eysinga, and Couchoud, and Couchoud's *Jesus, the God Made Man* (1937) are representative. Alfarcic, whom D. W. Riddle calls Strauss *redivivus*, attempts to show that Mark is a cento of ideas and expressions from Paul and the Old Testament. Couchoud's recent volume attempts to show how the semi-divine figure described in the apocalypses as coming on the clouds of heaven was combined with the idea of the celestial man and the one who was sent (Shiloh) by the John the Baptist movement into "the Lord Jesus Christ," and transformed by Paul, as a result of his own struggles and sufferings, into the crucified God. The Apocalypse made him the slain Lamb; Hebrews, the heavenly high priest; Marcion, the good God come to earth; Mark, the unique Son of Yahweh; Matthew, the Israelite messiah; John, God made flesh; and Luke, at length, the very human Jesus of Nazareth. Thus by the middle of the second century the conventional Christian figure of Jesus was given its shape. It will be noted that the logical series becomes chronological and evolutionary by the discovery of new dates for the writings.

The number of editions of the works of the mythologues that have been printed and the number of refutations, discussions, and other lives of Jesus that have appeared in French and Italian justify the comment of Salvatorelli that Couchoud has caused almost as great a sensation in the Latin countries as Drews in the Teutonic. Though some of the discussions have utterly lacked sound scholarship, some of the refutations, notably those of Johannes Weiss, Goguel, and Guignebert, have been on the highest plane, and one need have no doubts as to the eventual outcome in either France or Germany.

As Windisch put it in his survey of a dozen years ago, aside from the traditional orthodox view, there are three types of

theory: (1) the story of Jesus was an account of certain actual events which were embellished and transformed into a religious myth; (2) the story is an ancient myth which had been revived and revised toward the end of the pre-Christian era and was then transformed into an account of what were supposed to be actual events; (3) there is an inextricable mixture of fact and myth in the Gospel accounts. That is, the story is mythicized history, historicized myth, or both together. The discovery of new materials, which has been going on for years, is likely to continue. What new forms the discussion may take no one can predict. But it does seem possible to say that the proofs of Jesus' existence are sure.

VII. THE ANSWER TO THE DENIAL OF JESUS' EXISTENCE

It is impossible to enter into a discussion of these types in detail or into the refutation of the arguments against the historicity of Jesus with the thoroughness which the subject deserves. That would require a volume. Moreover, the case has already been adequately presented in numerous German and French works and in several which have been published in England and America.

Here it will be enough to summarize a few pertinent arguments which the writers of the affirmative have presented. As Drews admits, Eduard Meyer's three volumes on the *Origin and Beginnings of Christianity* (1921-23) came almost as an answer to his accusation that no outstanding and unprejudiced historian had discussed the subject. While admitting that Meyer was in every regard fitted to serve as a final authority in the historical field, Drews insisted that, in this matter, he was completely under the influence of the theological point of view. But of this there is no evidence except the fact that he agreed with the Christian scholars against Drews. Deserving to be placed beside Meyer is the Jewish scholar, Joseph Klausner, who, in his Hebrew volume on *Jesus of Nazareth* (1922, E. T., 1925),

considers most carefully the evidence for the existence of Jesus, with unquestioning positive results. His appraisal of the Talmudic evidence is particularly valuable. Why these men and others, such as Doctor Claude Montefiore, should be deterred by theological considerations from recognizing the weight of Drews' arguments it is difficult to understand. The same would seem to be true of the freethinking and radically critical professor of the history of Christianity in the Sorbonne, Charles Guignebert, and perhaps even more of the militant rationalist, Frederick C. Conybeare.

In view of the space to be given to the discussion of historical method, a word is in place as to methods upon which the Christ-myth theory depends.⁴ The attempt to prove borrowing from apparent resemblances is always ineffective or inconclusive. Independent parallelism is too common in all departments of anthropological investigation for resemblances to serve as demonstrations of borrowing except under rigorous scrutiny of all of the circumstances. This rigorous scrutiny which critical scholarship demands is exactly the lesson which even Drews' latest writings showed him not to have learned. He was irritated by the charge of dilettantism, but he could not escape it. Any argument seemed acceptable if it agreed with his conclusions. He seems to have believed that the larger the number of unfounded, often mutually exclusive hypotheses and groundless arguments or assumptions he could gather together, the stronger the evidence for his case. It is the method which a clever and unscrupulous lawyer uses to free a criminal, but it should not be adopted by a scholar. The comparative method must be used with more care. The same criticism applies with equal force to Couchoud.

Even if the negative evidence were much stronger than it is, the case would not be proved. If it could be demonstrated that there was a pre-Christian Jesus-cult, this would not prove that Jesus of Nazareth never lived. The name Joshua, or in Greek,

⁴See below, ch. VII.

Jesus, is one of the most common among the Jews. Josephus mentions some dozens of men with that name who lived in the first century A.D. That the early Christians should borrow the terms used in already existing cults to express their reverence for Jesus was inevitable. Otherwise they would have had to create a new language. Their chief argument was that Jesus was all that was claimed for other saviours, and more.

Unfortunately for the mythical theory, its evidence for a pre-Christian Jesus-worship is most flimsy. It rests upon the reinterpretation of passages in ancient writers which are more reasonably understood in other ways. It depends, for example, upon passages from Epiphanius, a notably untrustworthy writer, passages which are most uncertain of meaning.

Finally, the argument against the existence of Jesus ignores a mass of evidence in various ancient writings, particularly in the Talmud, which goes as far to prove his historicity as does the evidence for the majority of the philosophers, teachers, and prophets of the ancient world. If it be said that the existence of Jesus is defended because of his religious importance, it is in point to reply that it is because of his ecclesiastical importance that it is denied. The evidence for the early date of the New Testament writings is becoming stronger rather than weaker as time goes on, particularly with the discovery of papyrus copies which may go back to the middle of the second century, earlier than many of Drews' coadjutors have dated the original documents. With the passing of the Dutch radicals, which Drews recorded with sorrow, no reputable scholars can now be found to deny the authenticity of at least eight of the Pauline letters, with a date in the middle of the first century. The present tendency is to set the synoptic Gospels early rather than late, certainly between 70 and 100 A.D. Couchoud's dates in the second century are impossible. Practically all of the proponents of the Christ-myth theory acknowledge that such early dates negate their arguments.

This does not at all touch the difficulties which modern science and philosophy find in the Gospels and which are the true original cause of the theory. That there are elements in the Gospel narratives which are unhistorical and that these elements are among the weaknesses and handicaps of modern Christianity should not be denied. But this does not justify a revival of the Hegelian apotheosis of the idea to the neglect of historical fact. The antithesis between truth and fact is a false one. The good need not be rejected with the bad. "The baby should not be thrown out with the bath water." That is a fault of a certain inadmissible type of dialectic, which is not found in Germany alone.

If Strauss, in his mythical theory, was on the wrong track and if the radical, left-wing Hegelians have only wandered still farther from the historical truth, what progress was made by the other group which a century ago seemed to be the school of the future, the more reasonable and constructive right wing of Tübingen criticism? The question is to be answered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AND TENDENCY CRITICISM BAUR AND THE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL

I. BAUR'S PREPARATION

WHEN, in 1841, Strauss threw down his torch in disgust, his old friends in Tübingen were ready to take it up. The "new Tübingen school," the most powerful single influence on theological thinking in the middle of the nineteenth century, was a very different group from the "old Tübingen school" of Storr and Steudel. Where the older school was negative and polemical, the new group was positive and constructive. Where the first had been ostensibly conservative but apparently reasonable, though actually illogical, confused, and unproductive, the second was truly progressive and original, even radical and erratic. Its moving spirit, Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), was a man of unceasing industry, remarkable critical penetration, and undoubted constructive originality.

The man was so completely swallowed up in his work that personal details do not abound concerning him. So much the more valuable is a picture drawn, evidently from personal acquaintance, by an anonymous American writer in the *Christian Examiner* of January, 1858, only two years before his death.

"The 'Ordinary Professor of Evangelical Theology,' " so the paragraph runs, "is now sixty-five years old, a man of large frame, above middle height, with heavy features, and a massy

head covered with grayish hair. The wide and intense enthusiasm that greeted the first disclosure of his critical views has passed away. Personally, he excites, as might be expected, very little interest; his manner in his lecture-room is not attractive. But even his opponents concede his ability and his worth. . . . It is some years since he preached his last sermon, exhorting his hearers to abandon the letter that killeth for the spirit which giveth life; and in narrowing the sphere of his public duties, he has narrowed also the circle of his sympathies. Baur sits alone, surrounded by piled-up folios, in an uncarpeted study, toiling fourteen hours a day, in vacation time, upon the crowning labour of his life, the History of the Church, only interrupting his labour in term time to lecture before his classes; and still he finds leisure to write articles for his magazine, and to keep up an acquaintance with the popular literature of the day. His wife is dead. His daughter, married to Doctor Zeller, is, of course, separated from her father. 'He has no satisfaction in life, now, but to work.'"¹

In a most interesting manner Baur fits the Kantian pattern of German professor. Born in a parsonage, at eight years of age he was taken to Blaubeuren, where his father became Dekan, and from that time until his death, for sixty years, he lived in a theological atmosphere, at Blaubeuren, Maulbronn, and Tübingen, as student and teacher, always in pious Württemberg. Practically all of his life centers at Blaubeuren and Tübingen and was devoted to the historical study of Christian doctrine. Within that field and all that immediately affected it his learning was prodigious. But he rarely took any outstanding part in the ecclesiastical or political controversies of his time, except as his own work aroused opposition. No rash or hasty utterances on either social or political subjects ever endangered his Tübingen chair. His radicalism aroused many enemies and some of his more outspoken pupils suffered, suffered merely because

¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 38 f.

of their connection with him. But his solidity and self-restraint made him almost impregnable in his university position.

He always looked back upon his nine youthful years as professor at Blaubeuren, where he married and established a happy home (and where Strauss was one of his pupils), as the most delightful of his life. But his long period at Tübingen was not less fruitful and happy. He was self-distrustful as he went to assume the chair of Storr and his teacher Bengel, for, up to that time, he had studied theology only by the way, along with philosophy and history. He therefore devoted himself to a strenuous regime. Rising at four in the morning, even in the winter when the ink was frozen—he would not require the servants to rise to build a fire, and of course no professor could build his own fire—he laboured throughout the day, with a break only for a walk in the afternoon or evening. He was expected to lecture on church history, the history of doctrine, New Testament introduction and exegesis, and ecclesiastical law. He was the Sunday morning preacher until late in life. After Steudel's death in 1837, he had important responsibilities in the management of the evangelical seminary and *Stift*. Only indomitable industry could have added to these official duties his long list of publications.

Quiet as his life outwardly was, the story of his intellectual development is fascinating, not because it is unusual or fantastic, but because it can be followed so accurately and proceeds so steadily, like a slow cinema of an unfolding flower. In him were wedded the two outstanding "tendencies," as he would call them, of his time, Hegel's philosophy of historical development and the historical criticism of Niebuhr and Ranke. It was his misfortune that the ephemeral philosophical theory outweighed the permanently valuable historical method. But, even so, in the hands of his thoroughly sincere and absolutely ruthless logic, they were tools which placed him far in advance of all of his contemporaries in the theological field.

There had been nothing unusual in the instruction which he received at Blaubeuren, Maulbronn, and Tübingen. None of his teachers made any special impression upon him except the conservative but thoughtful and solid historian of dogma, Ernst Gottlieb Bengel (1769-1826), grandson of the more famous exegete of the eighteenth century. Between the time of Storr and that of Steudel, Bengel was the outstanding representative of rationalistic supernaturalism and the most influential theologian in Germany. Baur soon found Bengel's philosophy entirely unsatisfactory and in spite of his teacher's pronounced opposition to Schleiermacher's "mysticism," he eventually discovered in Schleiermachers *Christliche Glaube* (1821) a solid basis for his thinking. But this proved to be only a temporary stage in his thinking, for Hegel finally eclipsed Schleiermacher. With his Hegelian philosophy Baur combined knowledge of historical criticism as developed by Niebuhr and Ranke.

II. BAUR'S THEORIES APPLIED TO THE GOSPELS

In 1835 the Hegelian dialectic took the helm. In Judaistic, "Petrine" Christianity Baur discovered the thesis, in Paulinism its antithesis. These two "tendencies," which must be logically and chronologically related as primary and secondary, allowed him to determine what was early and authentic, and what, on the contrary, was later and unauthentic. So he could accept only Galatians, I and II Corinthians, and Romans as Pauline, and relegate the rest to a later period.

Baur was now ready to discover where the Gospels belonged in the development of primitive Christian literature. Indeed, he had already begun to locate and evaluate them. In 1844 he published in the *Theological Annals*, the new periodical which Zeller had founded as the organ of the Tübingen school, a long discussion of the fourth Gospel. He began with it, he explained, because its striking individuality rendered it easiest to place in the line of development. He next turned to Luke, a discussion

of which appeared in 1846. These two articles formed the bulk of his *Critical Researches on the Four Gospels*, published as a book in 1847, with an introduction discussing previous Gospel criticism and with relatively brief studies of Matthew and Mark. In 1851 he published *The Gospel of Mark According to Its Origin and Character*. His *Church History*, of which the first volume appeared in 1851, gives a brief summary of his views on Jesus and the Gospels.

While agreeing with Strauss in general, Baur and his disciples denied that he had explained all of the literary phenomena which appear in the Gospels. Why were myths introduced into the Gospel stories? The argument ran thus:

A myth has three characteristics: (1) it is not history, but fiction; (2) it is not the work of an individual, but of a group; it is not consciously and intentionally, but unintentionally constructed; it is folk tale; but (3) it is not the product simply of the free play of fancy or of the gradual recasting of historical recollection. It serves to express some definite content of general interest and importance, certain practical or dogmatic ideas and interests, in the case in hand, religious ideas.²

Why, then, did the different Gospels express such divergent points of view? A myth had something to teach. The legendary tradition of historical fact and the mythmaking activity which Strauss assumed explained only the parts which were common to all of the Gospels. How did the remainder originate?

This was the cue for Baur to come upon the stage. Strauss's task had been "to set aside indefensible assumptions, to free biblical students from the incomprehensible ideas of supernaturalistic interpretation and the vexatious processes of rationalistic methods." Baur's was to "secure a satisfactory view of the origin and the early development of Christianity."³ Strauss came to his task as a philosopher, Baur as a historian. Strauss

²Zeller, *Vort. u. Abh.*, I, 278.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 281 f.

was above all a critic who wished to demolish what he believed to be false and whose positive contribution was entirely secondary. Baur's criticism of tradition was merely a means to his chief end, the reconstruction of the historical situation.

III. BAUR'S RESULTS

The results of Baur's studies were definite and, for him, unimpeachable. Instead of Strauss's two types, supernaturalistic-allegorical and naturalistic-euhemeristic, he divided previous discussion of the Gospels into three: (1) the dogmatic, (2) the abstract critical, and (3) the negative critical, or dialectic. The dogmatic was represented by Augustine, Gerson, Andrew Osiander, Martin Chemnitz, Johann August Bengel, and Gottlob Christian Storr. It was based upon *Theopneustie*, "divine inspiration," in the most rigorous sense. The second, or abstract critical, conception was that of Eichhorn, Hug, Gieseler, Schleiermacher, De Wette, and Credner, all of them Baur's older contemporaries or recent predecessors. It was a purely literary criticism, which took little or no account of the historical conditions under which the documents were written. The third, the negative critical, or dialectic, type, was that of Strauss and his opponents, Neander, Ebrard, Wieseler, Bruno Bauer, and Christian Gottlob Wilke.⁴

The peculiarity of Strauss's procedure was that he had abandoned the criticism of the documents for the criticism of the story. Strauss had put out all of the lights which criticism had lighted and the eye had difficulty in accommodating itself to the darkness so as to be able to see anything at all. Baur insisted that it was worth while for the critic to learn the extent of his ignorance. He was then in a position to go on toward more positive results. But Strauss's critics had made no real progress toward construction. So Baur could still maintain,

⁴Baur, *Kritische Unters.*, pp. 2-76; see on Strauss's discussion of previous writers, above, pp. 58, 62 ff.

although now every one agrees that Weisse and Wilke, in proving the priority of Mark,⁵ had made the one positive contribution that prepared for the progress which the last forty years of the century were to witness.

Baur could not foresee the new direction which criticism would take, for he thought his own procedure, the last of his four types, to be the only "historical method." Its essential task was to discover the whole connection of the circumstances out of which a writing arose. At this point Baur was in the full tide of the developing historical criticism of his day. But for him, it meant to fit history into the preconceived scheme of the pendulum swing between opposites, between Judaism and Paulinism. Every writing had its "tendency," its own peculiar attitude toward the problems which were current at the time of its composition. By discovering that tendency one found a certain and trustworthy measuring stick by which to determine its character, the historical value of its statements, and the place which it occupied in the already determined course of historical development. In the New Testament the result was a clear and simple scheme. Matthew, the most Jewish of the Gospels, was necessarily the first. Luke was quite plainly anti-Jewish and Pauline. Next to Paul's epistles, it was the "purest and most important source we possess for the knowledge of Paulinism." It must be later than Matthew.⁶ Mark represented the reconciliation of the two opposites.

The characteristic qualities and weaknesses of Baur's method are illustrated by his treatment of Mark. The argument rests entirely upon a proof *e silentio*, upon Mark's omissions of the distinctive elements of Matthew and Luke. Mark leaves out the infancy narratives; therefore he must be docetic, or at least unconcerned with the human side of Jesus' life. He mentions neither a natural nor a supernatural origin of Jesus. Therefore he represents a reconciliation between two parties in the

⁵See below, pp. 177-81. ⁶*Gesch. der christl. Kirche*, I, 73 f., E. T., I, 77 f.

Church. Mark omits the Sermon on the Mount, with its emphasis on the Jewish Law and much else that is Jewish, in order not to keep alive the famous controversy between Paul and the Judaizers. For the same reason he omits all that was peculiar in Luke's Pauline Gospel. Once one admits Baur's date for Mark and his theory that Mark has no trustworthy historical material except what he has excerpted from Matthew and Luke, his conclusions are inevitable. But the date had been determined by the proposed view of the tendencies.⁷ In other words, his theory gave his results.

So far as concerns Gospel criticism, Baur's greatest service is to be found in the sharp contrast he drew between the fourth Gospel and the other three. He insisted that the two contradictory accounts could not both be true. On this point the scholar was at the parting of the ways. "If it be assumed that the four Gospels agree and are capable of being harmonized, then the absolute importance which the fourth Gospel assigns to the person of Jesus must determine our whole view of the Gospel history." Christianity came to mean the incarnation of the Logos. "It is a miracle in the strictest sense and absolutely. The human is lost in the divine, the natural in the supernatural." That meant two things: that all historical treatment must be abandoned, for miracle takes the place of history, and that the synoptic Gospels "virtually forfeit their position as historical sources."⁸

Baur's escape from this dilemma was to deny all historicity to the fourth Gospel and to turn to the other three, and especially to Matthew, his oldest Gospel, for his picture of the life and teachings of Jesus. Where Strauss had played the fourth Gospel off against the other three so as to make it appear that all were equally untrustworthy, and to dissolve the whole

⁷*Kritische Unters.*, pp. 563-67, and *Das Markus Evangelium*.

⁸See *Gesch. der christl. Kirche*, I, 24-41, E. T., I, 25-43; *Die Tübinger Schule*, pp. 30 ff., for this and the summary in the following section. See also below, p. 152.

story in myth, Baur found firm ground for a historical account by rejecting the fourth Gospel.

IV. BAUR'S CONCEPTION OF JESUS

Baur's results, however, were by no means entirely positive. He complained that Strauss had overlooked the importance of Jesus as a historical character.⁹ Surely a magnificent example of the pot libelling the kettle! It is not entirely fair to judge Baur by the very brief summaries which he has left, for, like Hegel, he left no definitive life of Jesus. Answering Uhlhorn, only two years before his death, he summed up in concise form his conception of Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity.¹⁰ There were, he said, two elements which made up the constituent factors of the person of Christ, the moral content of his teaching and the belief in his messiahship—surely a somewhat attenuated person. In these two, in genuine Hegelian fashion, Baur had the eternal idea and the historical concept. The real essence of Christianity, its solid center, was to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, and other teaching discourses of Jesus, where, in discussing the kingdom of God and the conditions of participation in it, he attempted to bring human beings into a genuinely moral relation to God. Over this, like Hegel, he waxed eloquent: "This is the principle within it which rises above everything individual; it is the universal, eternal, and absolute in its content."

The eternal idea must have a finite form in which to express itself and so to enter into the process of historical development. Through the conception of the Jewish messiahship, which Jesus fully adopted, this ideal spiritual content entered into the finite "form" of the national existence; in this way Jewish particularism attached itself to the universal. The concept of messiahship made the connection between the idea in Jesus'

⁹In a letter of Feb. 10, 1836, quoted by Zeller, *Vortr. u. Abh.*, I, 421.

¹⁰On this and what follows see *Die Tübinger Schule*, pp. 30 ff., *Gesch. der christl. Kirche*, I, 25-42, E. T., I, 26-43.

consciousness and the believing world. "Who would have believed in him if a company of believing adherents had not gathered round him as the messiah?"

Here, then, according to Baur, were the two opposites which unite themselves in Jesus in a way we cannot follow or explain; the universal, all-inclusive human, the divinely exalted, and the narrowness and limitation of the national messianic idea. Out of the antithesis of these two ideas the history of the Church necessarily developed. Surely nothing could be simpler or seem more completely satisfying as an explanation of a tremendous historical process.

What the actual content of this moral message of Jesus was Baur found set forth most completely in the Beatitudes. They expressed the "fundamental mood" of Christianity. What is it that found expression in these utterances? It is a religious consciousness which was permeated by the deepest sense of the pressure of the finite and of all the contradictions of the present, and yet was infinitely exalted and knew itself in spite of this to be far superior to everything finite and limited. In the contrast of having and not having, poverty and riches, earth and heaven, the present and the future, the Christian consciousness attained its purest ideality; it is the ideal unity of all the contradictions which force themselves upon the consciousness. It is easy to see how eminently satisfactory it was to Baur to ring the changes thus upon the Fichtean-Hegelian scheme of antitheses. A strong strain of Kantianism appears in his portrayal of Jesus' message. No man, he insists, can make any outward claim upon God's kingdom. Every one must seek the evidence of fitness for the kingdom of God nowhere but in himself, in his inner nature, in his moral consciousness. According to Hegelian principles this eternal and unchangeable foundation idea must find expression in a finite representation. And this it did in Jesus and his ministry.

Baur's account of Jesus and his ministry is extremely concise

and simple. It actually contains no more concrete detail than does that of Strauss. What concerned Baur was the messianic idea, that second determinative, essential element in Christianity, which made its historical development possible. The important question for historical criticism was how Jesus came to the conclusion that he was the messiah. Here Baur's critical insight seized upon the vital question, but he was unable to reach a satisfactory answer. The term, "Son of man," the group of incidents centering about Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi, and the triumphal entry proved beyond cavil that he did so believe but do not explain how he came so to believe.

Why did Jesus go up to Jerusalem and die there? Once more—in good Hegelian fashion, although Baur did not note it—Johannine antitheses, the conflict between the faith of his disciples and the doubt of his adversaries, drove Jesus to the holy city. His momentous resolution to go there "can only have proceeded from the conviction that it was absolutely necessary for his cause, now ripe for immediate decision, to be decided at once." In the death of Jesus the antithesis of the universal moral idea and the particular Jewish messianic idea was overcome in a new synthesis. A messiah who had died was impossible for the Jews. Jesus ceased then to be Jewish and became universal. The question of the nature of the resurrection was unimportant for Baur. The decisive fact was that the disciples' faith in Jesus' resurrection, whatever its basis, became for their minds "a solid and unquestionable fact." And upon this faith and out of the antithesis which still persisted between Jewish and gentile, Petrine and Pauline ideas, Christianity and the Church were born, and the Gospels were written with their variously coloured portraits of Jesus.

V. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HEGELIAN CRITICISM

Baur's fame was greater than his influence. He had no colleagues to support him. Beck soon had a larger following at

Tübingen. His successor, Carl Weizsäcker, was a man of different character and training and approached the Synoptic problem with different assumptions. Some of Baur's pupils, Köstlin, Zeller, and Schwegler for example, in spite of their own ability, were prevented by conservative theological sentiment from securing chairs in theological schools. Others, such as Ritschl, abandoned Baur's principles; all eventually modified them. Some, like Bruno Bauer, brought disgrace upon him and his theories. Pfleiderer, perhaps the greatest of Baur's followers, along with Hilgenfeld and Holsten, rendered long years of fruitful service as professor, but created no body of adherents, for Hegelianism as such eventually lost its charm for the scientific, nonphilosophical nineteenth century.

What, then, did Hegelianism contribute to the search for the real Jesus? What permanent significance have Strauss and Baur? Let the evanescent vogue of the radical wing be forgotten! Numerous minor achievements by one or another *Tübinger* might be mentioned. Their real contribution lay in the fact that they insisted upon a historical approach to the study of Christian origins and upon the application to the New Testament documents of the accepted methods of historical criticism, no matter what the results might be. This was only the principle upon which Ernesti and Semler, Lessing and Herder had insisted, that the Bible should be interpreted like other books, but it was carried out to its logical conclusion.

The faults of principle and method which destroyed the systems of Strauss and Baur should not have blinded the world to their real services. They drew attention to three factors of Gospel criticism which should never afterward have been forgotten: the importance of the legend- and myth-making instinct, the influence of current "tendencies," and the unhistorical character of the fourth Gospel.

The tendency to the making of legends, to the glorification of the hero of any story by the addition of fictitious traits and

of ideas which the hero-worshiper imagines the hero must have had, is universal and cannot be denied in the case of Jesus. Similarly myths arise to explain historical persons, events, and institutions of the past. Nowadays common parlance knows of a Wilson-myth, a Lincoln-myth. How much more reason and opportunity there must have been for the development of myths and legends about Jesus, not only on account of the messianic claims which he made and which his disciples fully allowed, as Strauss showed, but also for a reason which Strauss overlooked, namely, the tremendous impression which Jesus made upon the circle of his followers! Only a person far out of the ordinary could have inaugurated the Christian movement.

Each of the Gospels was the product of a special set of circumstances and reflects those circumstances more accurately than it does many of the details of the life and words of Jesus. This principle is one of the abiding contributions of Baur. It was by no means a new idea, but Baur used it more consistently than any of his predecessors. That the Gospels do have "tendencies" cannot be denied and should never have been forgotten, in spite of the mistaken use of them in the Tübingen reconstructions of history. The present generation is recovering this valuable idea.

In the case of the fourth Gospel, just because it had a distinct and self-conscious tendency, as the others did not, Baur hit upon the proper criticism. Christianity would be much nearer its goal today if the Church had followed Baur rather than Schleiermacher in this matter, and had not lost the historical Jesus in the cold, white mists of Johannine mysticism. In this direction twentieth-century scholarship still limps behind Baur and Strauss.

The oblivion into which Hegelian criticism of the New Testament speedily fell was by no means due to the merely outward circumstances that Baur's disciples gained few influential academic or ecclesiastical positions, and that Strauss

retired disgusted from the fray. It was due rather to the inherent faults in their methods: in their "historical dialectic," their either-or logic, and their preoccupation with ideas. First and fundamental was the *a priori* Fichtean pattern of thesis—antithesis—synthesis, or position—opposition—reconciliation, which gave them not a hypothesis to be tested but a Procrustean bed into which history had to be fitted. That Strauss's myth theory and Baur's Petrine-Pauline antithesis were not theological dogmas but scientific hypotheses was a tremendous step in advance. Unfortunately the theories rather than the facts were held sacrosanct. The facts had to be suited to the theories, not the theories to the facts.

Equally unfortunate was their second chief shortcoming, their either-or logic. Either supernatural or rational, either historical or mythical, either Petrine or Pauline are false antitheses. Such a method of argument is illogical and unscientific and can lead only to false results. The terms used are not logical contradictories. Moreover human life and history always exhibit an infinite wealth of possibilities which no *a priori* logic can understand.

Thirdly, the almost exclusive preoccupation of both Strauss and Baur with the history of ideas resulted in a complete distortion of the historical development. They failed to take account of the inexhaustible richness of the social process. They were wrong in imagining that the kaleidoscopic variety of social development could be crammed into the narrow framework of Hegelian dialectic. Not to mention other elements in ancient culture, they knew far too little even of the history of Jewish and Hellenistic ideas to be able to reach final results.

Finally, they failed to understand and use historical method as Niebuhr, Ranke, and their followers were beginning to practice it. The unfortunate isolation of theology left them stranded on the shores of forgotten isles. Claiming to be thoroughly historical, their theories prevented them from asking

of the facts of history the questions which could discover what had actually happened.

There were, then, two outstanding faults in Strauss and Baur which succeeding generations have had to set themselves to correct: (1) faulty criticism of the Gospels as historical sources; and (2) lack of knowledge of the historical setting by means of which Jesus and the Gospels must be interpreted and evaluated. The criticism of the Gospels involves two problems, the Johannine and the Synoptic. The study of the background involves historical and archæological research in numerous directions. Some of the applications of this material will be illustrated in the fourth part of this discussion, on the interpretation and evaluation of Jesus. But the interpretation must be preceded by the study of sources according to the principles of historical criticism. It is necessary, therefore, to follow the development of historical method and the course of investigation, first into the Johannine and second into the Synoptic problem.

PART III

THE SEARCH FOR CRITICAL
METHODS OF HISTORICAL STUDY

SUMMARY

VII. History means (1) the course of human experience, or (2) the records of that course, or (3) a scientific study of that course. The earliest conception of history, in the second sense as a human-interest narrative, has passed through the didactic and pragmatic stages to stand now under the banner of the search for factual data, that is, history in the third sense. History in the first sense has been variously understood as a cycle of predetermined deterioration endlessly repeated, or a predetermined deterioration ending in a return to a primitive paradisiacal state, or in modern times as an endless progressive evolution. Its processes may be understood by men because men are historical beings who have some ability to project themselves into the feelings of other men. The last century has seen a remarkable development of the methods for determining historical fact and for securing the means by which the past may be appreciated.

VIII. The study of the *milieu*, the environment, or "the soil out of which the events grew," is the means by which a modern may come to understand an ancient man or an ancient literature. In the case of Jesus, a knowledge of ancient religions, ancient superstition and science, human geography, archæology, the languages of Palestine, especially Greek and Aramaic, and rabbinic and apocalyptic literature, all are necessary for an appreciation of the situations and conditions with which Jesus had to deal.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORICAL SCIENCE AND GOSPEL CRITICISM

THE general conditions under which the scientific study of the life of Jesus began have been discussed. Without rationalism, deism, and the enlightenment, freedom to study Jesus as a historical character would have been impossible. Without pietism, the fundamental interest in him and the necessary appreciation of his religious value would have been wanting. Without the critical philosophy of Kant and his successors, a proper balance between the intellectual, the moral, and the religious would hardly have been discovered. Hegelianism very properly emphasized the problem of the philosophical presuppositions of history, but erred egregiously as to its conclusions, because its own presuppositions were rationalistic, not scientific. They were based on deductive logic and reason, not on observation and induction. Hegel's extremely valuable conception of historical development was vitiated for the same reason. Schleiermacher represents a remarkable synthesis of these tendencies of his age, combined with philological and historical criticism. But, while he is very far from having inaugurated this last and from being the first to apply it to the New Testament, he was equally far from a consistent and adequate application of it. Before it was possible to treat Jesus properly as a truly historical person, the concept of history itself, over which Lessing, Herder, Kant, and Hegel had laboured, had to be clarified still further and historical methods

had to be more fully developed. That has required a long and arduous adventure of the spirit, which even now is far from finished.

I. KINDS OF HISTORY

One source of misapprehension must be removed at the outset, the ambiguity which envelops the words "history" and "historical." What does it mean to write a history, or biography, of a "historical Jesus"? In English "history" has three senses: (1) the course of events, or, more properly speaking, human experience of the course of events; (2) the description of the course of events as experienced by various persons; and (3) the critical study which should precede any attempt at description. History is, first of all, what happens to men, an onward-flowing stream of indescribably varied and multitudinous events which enter into human experience. In the second sense oral traditions and written, or recorded, history are attempts to describe the indescribable flow of man's experience of happenings. "Historiography," which, on the analogy of "geography," might mean the description of what has happened, that is, history in the second sense, is loosely used also for an account of the process of writing history. In the third sense of historical method, one may speak of a "science of history," using "science" in the sense, not of a body of "laws," or even of "statistical averages," as in the physical sciences, not even of a system of cause and effect, but of an ordered and critically sifted body of knowledge based on observation. For this third sense English should use the word "historics" as it does "physics" and "dogmatics."

For the clearness of thought essential to an understanding of the problems involved in a discussion of the historical Jesus, it is indispensable that, whenever one speaks of history, one should consider which of the three meanings one has in mind. It is equally important to remember that remembered and

recorded history is only the merest approximation to the actual course of events. Its sources are imperfect and incomplete expressions of the impressions which have been made upon human beings by events and which have been recorded according to the selective interests and prejudices of individuals. It is a reconstruction out of materials chosen and arranged according to implicit or explicit interests and theories in the mind of the historian. The vast majority of these reconstructions have not been critically prepared, but are as inaccurate as they are incomplete.

The writing, or reporting, of history began with interest in persons, events, and social customs. That interest led to folk-songs, sagas, legends, myths, epics, narratives in prose, chronicles, and various other kinds of records, much of which is material for history, rather than history itself. Narrative history, of which Herodotus was the "father," and which is more literary than factual, was soon paralleled by didactic history, which Thucydides popularized. The practical moral and political lessons of didactic history were soon combined with pragmatic history, which attempted to trace the real causes and inner connections of events, whether physical or psychical. The Old Testament Deuteronomist editors are striking examples of this conception of history. Plutarch is another. Every modern historian who attempts to discover why Rome fell or what caused the Reformation is operating with pragmatic history. To it he usually adds the didactic element.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, history was merely a knowledge of past events which discovered what was useful or injurious in politics and society and especially what led to happy and successful living. Without the least loss of these interests, the nineteenth century added the evolutionary, or genetic, conception of history as an ever-flowing stream, or as a long chain of intimately connected events, each looking forward and backward. Nineteenth-century optimism painted

the evolutionary process in gorgeous colours as an inevitable progress toward whatever men most desired.

II. THE NATURE OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

Whatever the motives that led men to study history, the question as to the forces behind it inevitably arose. What makes things happen? What is the driving power, or principle, which directs the onward flow of the stream? In what direction is it flowing, and why? In what will it eventually end?

According to the ancients, whether pagan, Jew, or Christian, the course of history was determined by Fate or the gods and its direction was downward. The world and the human race were deteriorating in wealth, happiness, and morals. The idea of evolution was practically unknown. For many moderns who have come under the influence of the physical sciences with their concept of natural law, history is equally determined in advance, but, due to nineteenth-century evolutionary optimism, its direction is usually thought to be onward and upward. All the data were interpreted in the light of evolutionary theories. Positivism held that historical development is determined by natural factors, such as soil and climate, by economic organization, and by social conditions. God dropped out of the picture. Religion, morality, and spiritual culture were effects rather than causes. Social forces, not the free individual, furnished the driving power. The end was to be "the greatest happiness for the greatest number."

Philosophical idealism upheld a broader conception of the nature of the historical process. History, according to Lotze, is the result of the reciprocal interaction of the inner drives of human nature, the outward natural and cultural conditions, and the materials with which man works. According to the theory of values of Windelband and his school these drives and interactions must not be mechanically or deterministi-

cally conceived.¹ History has to do, not only with natural laws, but also with human values. The spiritual values which reason discovers cannot be deduced from or based upon man as a product of nature and his natural instincts and drives. "Man ascends into the world of spiritual values only as a historical being. His morality and his law, his art and his religion are results won by struggle and suffering out of his history."

Rickert made clear the distinction between the type of mental activity involved in the mathematical and natural sciences on the one hand and the social sciences on the other and established the fact that the values which history selects are not mere postulates of the mind but a part of life itself. Their inconceivable richness permeates all experience and all history, in constant competition and interaction with the physical forces which go to make history. History, then, is not a mere succession of objective events observed from without. Men are not spectators on the shores of the stream of events, but active participants. Not what happens, but what is experienced, makes history. Events have historical meaning only as they happen to persons. History is experience; written history is recorded experience.

Dilthey suggested a profound conception of ultimate reality when he insisted upon the apparent platitude that history is possible only because men are all historical beings. The truly new, twentieth-century history puts souls, not their outward expressions, at the center. We never experience the whole of nature; our knowledge of the outer world is based on small samples only. Because written history is not a mere collection of objective data, facts, statistics, and dates, but always a fragment of experience, its fragmentary incompleteness does not vitiate its value. Because it is experience, we can understand

¹On the following see Hans Leisegang, *Deutsche Philosophie im XX. Jahrhundert*, Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1928, pp. 106-17, and his Bibliography, pp. 133 f.; also Wilhelm Windelband, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Heinz Heimsoeth, Tübingen: Mohr, 1935, pp. 548-70, 593-610.

it as we never can the physical world which we know but do not understand. The process by which we realize the meaning of history Dilthey has rightly called "empathy" (*Einfühlung*), that is putting one's self into the experience of others. In proportion as we saturate ourselves with all that goes to make the experience of another person or another age, we live over again that experience and come to "realize" what it was. This means that something new has been created in the understanding soul, something that will bear fruit in the future. Thus history becomes both a teacher and a creative force.

III. THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

History, then, in the third sense of the word, paraphrasing Bernheim, may be described as that science which investigates and describes, in their physical and psychical connections and their relations of time and space, the experiences of human beings in their evolution through their individual, as well as typical and collective, activities.²

The description means that the individual, the great man, as well as the social group, must be considered and that neither physical nor psychical factors may be neglected. It means that history is concerned primarily with change. For history records events, not merely because they happen, but because they have relation to the movement and direction of human development, a development that in some way, direct or indirect, connects with the historian's own experience. Continuity, then, is one of the primary characteristics of history. Every "event" is an "outcome" of previous happenings and the forerunner of others. Continuity, however, is not merely successive, it is also contemporary, for, to put it otherwise, history is monstrously complex. Every event and every person is part of a larger whole and cannot be understood alone, but only in relation to the whole. Every man, said Hegel,

²See Bernheim, *Lehrbuch*, p. 9.

is a product of his time. So also with every book and, indeed, every idea. Every event, taking "event" in the most inclusive sense possible, is intelligible only in so far as all of its relations, before and after and on every side, are known. In every direction historical relativism, that is the multiplicity and inescapability of historical relations, must be given full weight. Subsequent events are of prime importance in interpreting any event. Though the former events do not change, the historian's account will necessarily change with a fuller understanding of all of the relations, which multiply with time, and with his own changes in point of view. Events yesterday and today do not affect the life and work of Jesus, but they do affect profoundly modern interpretations of him and, therefore, his influence on present and subsequent history.

The description means also an enlargement of the field of history. It is helpful to make a distinction between situations and conditions. Too often history has been merely a description of the situations created by the acts of persons. But the conditions under which persons create situations are equally relevant to the outcome. This is by no means a new idea. Ancient writers, Hippocrates, Strabo, and Vitruvius, had included environmental geographical factors. In the sixteenth century Jean Bodin, in the eighteenth Montesquieu and Voltaire, had attempted descriptions of society as a whole. The nineteenth century began to catch a glimpse of the real values of this kind of history. The idea of *milieu*, emphasized by Comte, Buckle, Taine, and others, became one of the war cries of the progressive historian. The twentieth century, in its so-called "new history," is still travelling in the same direction.

Modern history has been socialized. It has learned from the materialists and positivists to value the mass not less than the individual. It is social and democratic in its interests, in the sense that it has discovered the necessity of including the whole of society in its investigations, the poor not less than the rich,

the problems and feelings of the multitudes not less than the passions and intrigues of courts and camps, conditions not less than situations. History must always look for the social processes which are behind the event that serves as a dramatic announcement of change.

Recognition of the fact that history is a study of the evolution of society as a whole has brought in its train a tremendous enlargement of the field of study. The ideal is one after which the historian strives, but always in vain. It is impossible of realization because of the immensity of the field to be covered.³ Every feature of human life has to be considered, for every man is a product of his age, and all that goes into a process must be known if one is to understand the product. Therefore there have arisen a large number of sciences auxiliary to history, named partly from the field of human activity investigated, partly from the methods or materials used in the investigation. The histories of mathematics, medicine, biology, agriculture, economics, technology, art, literature, morals, religion, all are essential parts of the subject. The result has been a flock of new departments of knowledge. Anthropology, archæology, geography, climatology, psychology, sociology, all make their contribution.

This means that, to understand Jesus and the New Testament, the whole social situation, and not merely the religion of Judaism, must be considered. Since Christianity, in the beginning, was a movement among the masses and was little affected by the actions and attitudes of the "classes," the new interest of history in the doings of the people and in mass attitudes and movements has been decidedly favourable to the study of Christianity in its original environment. Unfortunately, up to the present time, the actions and ideas of prominent Christians whose names crept into the written records have received altogether too much attention from historians. Unfortunately

³See Chap. VIII.

also, the materials for the history of Christianity as a proletarian movement are extremely meager. The difficulty must be recognized, all the more because it cannot be entirely overcome.

The same caution must apply to the study of the life of Jesus. Students still pore over the wars of the Maccabees and the intrigues of Herod's court as if they gave some insight into the conditions which surrounded the life and affected the work of Jesus. Archæologists spend thousands of dollars excavating at Jerusalem, they fill volumes debating where the crucifixion took place. Excavation in a simple Galilean village of the time of Jesus would tell us far more about the conditions under which the Gospel was given to the world and therefore as to its original meaning. If we knew how many cities and villages of Galilee in Jesus' day were Jewish, under what conditions the people lived, how many synagogues had been built there, what their architecture and decorations were, how strict the Jews were in obeying the Law, and what were their dominant intellectual and religious interests, we should be far better able to criticize and interpret the teachings of Jesus. If it were possible to discover how far Hellenistic and Oriental mysticism had spread in Palestine and what was the character of the cults which the non-Jewish inhabitants favoured, we should be better able to determine how rapidly Christianity lost its Jewish features and how far the primitive message of Jesus was transformed and distorted.⁴

The implications of these new conceptions of the nature of history and the requirements of historical method were not often applied to Jesus in the early part of the nineteenth century, nor are they even now sufficiently appreciated. Except for a few, of whom Reimarus was a forerunner, the overwhelming power of current dogmatic views has made it impossible to conceive of Jesus as acting like other historical

⁴With this and the following *cf.* below, Chap. VIII.

characters. Not only he himself but also his moral and religious ideas must be regarded as unique, so indescribably superior to Judaism that a real historical continuity, in this case, was excluded. The course of his life was not natural; it was not subjected to social law, to "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," or the vicissitudes of human caprice. That is the picture which the fourth Gospel suggests. Christian Hermann Weisse (1801-66), though a Hegelian of no small gifts and a critic who made a real contribution to the solution of the Synoptic problem, proclaimed the orthodox doctrine that Jesus was in no sense a product of his people or influenced by them. He had brought down the essential ideas of Christianity, like the Koran for Moslems, as a revelation from heaven.

Even so great a man as Richard Rothe concluded that the Holy Spirit had developed a new language, in the Greek of the New Testament, in order that the new ideas which Christianity proclaimed might have adequate and fitting expression. Apparently it did not occur to him that Jesus must have spoken a language that could be understood. It remained for scholars of the last generation, some of them still active, to discover that the mother tongue of Jesus, Aramaic, was the commercial language of the whole Near East, and that the Greek of the New Testament, Rothe's "language of the Holy Spirit," was the *Koinê*, the simple and unadorned language of the common people in all of the cities of the Roman Empire. Too much sentiment and too little research have been spent upon the idea that Jesus was a man of the people. Jesus as well as the Gospels must be studied as a product of his times. Possibly many may be disappointed at the "man of the people" actually discovered by historical method. But we shall surely stumble and fall if we try to follow the trail of truth through the mountains of modern life with our eyes on the stars and our heads in the clouds.

IV. HISTORICAL CRITICISM

Since the eventual effect of the new conception of history upon the study of the life of Jesus was not anticipated, the development of corresponding phases of biblical study did not often raise any considerable or long-continued objection. To be sure, the pietist often criticized such studies as a waste of time. He preferred to enjoy the saccharine sweetness of his self-generated devotional ideas without the labour necessary to find out what the text actually meant. He objected to spending time on study about the Bible, instead of study of the Bible itself. However, he conceived the false idea that archæology confirmed the Bible and confounded the critics, and even he appreciated studies of ancient social life for their intrinsic human interest. The center of conflict has been the demand that the Bible should be treated critically as a source of information just as other ancient documents are treated by the historian.

What does this involve? How are historical sources criticized? The development of the methods of historical criticism has gone on *pari passu* with the enlarging conception and sharper definition of the nature of history. Any one but the most naïve must soon discover that historical records are often inconsistent and contradictory. Deliberate misrepresentations, forgeries, and spurious documents of various kinds, as well as misunderstandings, unintentional misstatements, and lapses of memory, will eventually reveal themselves to the student who clearly analyzes the records. The forgery of documents by churchmen during the Middle Ages led to the first development of the technique of criticism. The conflict between Protestants and Catholics promoted it, even before sincere desire for the truth became the dominant motive in historical research.

The nineteenth century, variously dubbed the "historical" and the "scientific" century, might also be called the skeptical

century. It devoted itself unremittingly to the task of exposing the frauds and discovering the facts of history, just as it gave itself to discover the facts of natural science. Well aware that innumerable "historical lies," the "Donation of Constantine," and the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals" for example, had been foisted upon previous generations, the critics of that self-confident century attempted to prove that "none of the ancients had written what was ascribed to him," and that the myths and legends of antiquity were all of them wholly false. The last century was not the first to develop such skepticism. It merely had the disease in a most acute form. Agrippa of Nettersheim as early as 1530 had included history in his discussion of the *Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences*. The *bon mot* that "history is a fable that has been agreed upon" (*fable convenue*) is—according to tradition—to be ascribed to the end of the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century, however, skepticism was raised to the throne of universal dominion. The historian used all of his strength in the discovery of lies, to the neglect of fact and especially of the constructive use of facts. Christ-myth theories, the elaborate skepticism still affected by some scholars, and the problem of "historicism" which troubles others are lingering after-effects of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reaction against earlier credulity.

V. HISTORICAL METHOD

Various procedures and the auxiliary sciences already mentioned gradually developed tests to apply to ancient tradition in order to discover the spurious and false and make possible the proper interpretation of the authentic and trustworthy remains. All this will be found discussed in works on historiography, philology, and archæology. Here only a few typical illustrations of the chief principles of criticism need be given for the sake of concreteness and clearness.

The basis of the study of ancient history must be exact and adequate philological method. Textual criticism will determine, so far as possible, the original words of the document. The interpreter must know the meaning of the words, not merely from the dictionary, but from wide reading. He must know the grammar and style so as to catch the finer shades of meaning. He must know the ancient society which produced the document, its ways of living and thinking, so that he may catch innumerable allusions and turns of expression that otherwise he would miss, and so that he may not mistake figure for fact. He must know the language of his sources and the society which produced them so thoroughly that he thinks and feels as the ancient writers and the people they describe thought and felt. When he has achieved this capacity for empathy, he is also in a position to detect the spurious and mistaken.

The process by which such exacting standards were developed has been a long one. Friedrich August Wolf (1757-1824) deserves to be remembered because, in his *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795), he attacked one of the most sacred of literary shrines when he argued that the famous poems were not the work of a single individual. Not so much the conclusions he reached, which were in part wrong because of defective data, but rather the strictly critical, logical method which he used, established a new era in philological and historical studies. Fifteen years later Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831) undermined the credit of Livy as Wolf had that of Homer. His work marks the beginning of the critical treatment of historical sources. Ere long, in Baur and Strauss, it bore fruit in the treatment of Christian tradition.

The next in the great trial of German historians, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), is most famous for his definition of the historian's task as neither æsthetic nor didactic, but purely factual and descriptive. He must seek to discover and describe

"what actually happened" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*). The historian was not called upon to sit in judgment on the past, to say whether actions were good or bad, but only to determine and report what had taken place. And for this he must have *documentation*. That was the great word for Ranke, and it still remains the first and indispensable requirement of the historian. The influence of Wolf, Niebuhr, and von Ranke on Schleiermacher has already been noticed.

After Ranke it is customary to name Mommsen (1817-1903) as the third great German historian. He approached his work as a jurist, epigraphist, and archæologist. He criticized written documents with no less of philological method and exactness than his predecessors, but rather with more, for he was concerned to reconstruct the whole of ancient life by the use of all possible materials. Because of his archæological interests, he is accused of making the written sources secondary rather than primary. Actually he combined breadth of interest in the whole social field with critical exactness. Youthful impressions from the French Revolution and the influence of romanticism had led Ranke to lay great emphasis on the part played by ideas in history. Mommsen escaped undue romanticism and moved a long step farther toward realistic history.

The reactions of historical science to the new currents of thinking in recent years have inevitably been exaggerated; often they have been most contradictory. While nineteenth-century evolutionism was demanding a "genetic" interpretation of every event, emphasis on "fact" and "documentation," along with criticism of the crude pragmatism of earlier historians, has led some historians to the neglect of connections between events. To some, by reaction against Hegelianism, history has become a mere succession of unrelated events. In reaction against didacticism, some refuse to ask the how or why of events. They are concerned only with what happened in the narrowest sense. Many students of the social sciences, sociolo-

gists, economists, and historians alike, imitate theoretical chemists and physicists who despise all attempts to use new discoveries in practical inventions. They have refused to attempt reconstructions of the course of human experience, because something of the subjective element necessarily enters into any attempt to discover the connections between events, just as it enters into the hypotheses of physical science.

Not infrequently hypercriticism overleaped the bounds of reason. Not only have absolutely genuine documents been rejected as false, but alterations and interpolations have been discovered where subsequent investigation has proved that none existed. Critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have shown an amazing self-confidence in making conjectural emendations in ancient documents. They have carried Dilthey's idea of empathy so far as to believe themselves able to understand an ancient author better than he understood himself. They have emended and expunged and added as if they were clairvoyant or omniscient.

Illustrations of critics' hypercritical errors might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. Their long-continued blindness to spurious documents and passages might also be shown. Nevertheless, criticism, soberly and thoroughly carried out, is indispensable if the truth in ancient documents is to be discovered. It must use all available criteria, all possible auxiliaries; it must be as broad as life. It must be sympathetic, or better empathetic, yet it must be independent. It must remain critical.

VI. HISTORICAL METHOD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

How did New Testament students respond to the stimuli which came to them from the philosophers, philologists, and historians? Have the sources of Jesus' life been adequately criticized and properly interpreted? To answer these questions, the foregoing brief summary of the history of the writing of

history and of the philosophy of history suggests five chief factors which must be considered:

(1) The conception of the nature of religion, *i.e.*, the philosophy of religion, adopted by each scholar or writer;

(2) His conception of the nature of history, *i.e.*, his philosophy of history;

(3) His conception of critical method, *i.e.*, how does he sift his sources so as to separate fact from fiction?

(4) His rules of interpretation, *i.e.*, how does he seek to acquire a proper understanding and appreciation of his facts? and

(5) His methods of reconstruction, *i.e.*, the manner in which his historical imagination uses his documents and the facts elicited from them to recover the best possible approximation to the original, full-flowing current of experience.

Since historical method has been developed partly in the study of the Bible, a part of the story of its application in that field has already been told, especially the part having to do with the search for a philosophy of religion and of history. As to critical method, up to the beginning of the century under consideration, that is up to the time of Strauss and Baur, even if great progress had not been made, it can honestly be claimed that, thanks to Ernesti, Semler, Lessing, Herder, Griesbach, Schleiermacher, Eichhorn, De Wette, and others, New Testament criticism has not fallen seriously behind criticism in other fields. Theology is not the only science that breeds, or at least harbours, conservatism. Philology and history are almost as bad, for human nature is the same in every field. Where national pride is touched the heretic historian lives almost as dangerously as the religious heretic. The chief difference between the student of religion and the philologist is that the religious heretic may arouse a larger number of more bitter enemies.

Before 1835 biblical criticism had already produced its share

of heretics, heroes of the faith who trusted the truth and foretold a future they did not live to see. One should not forget Wyclif, Tyndale, and Luther as forerunners of a more liberal attitude of mind and as veritable interpreters through their translations. The part of the English deists, French illuminati, and German enlighteners in promoting progress by emancipation from dogmatism has been mentioned. At this point a complete account of the early course of the historical criticism of the Gospels might well describe the work of Michaelis, Eichhorn, De Wette, and others who made worthy contributions. In general, however, they were not original or revolutionary.

The principles had been established on the philosophical side by Lessing, Herder, and Schleiermacher; on the other side of practical method by Ernesti and Semler. The Bible, including, of course, the Gospels, must be interpreted like other books, as written in the language of men. It must be philologically interpreted by men who know the grammar, the vocabulary, the style, and the literary character of the documents. It must be historically interpreted by men who know the people out of whom it sprang, for every book, no matter how great, is a social product. By the time of Strauss and Baur, then, the foundations had already been laid for a better criticism than they had practiced, one well within the field of historical method as employed by Niebuhr, Ranke, and Mommsen.

Implicit in these principles were certain further requirements which, as already noted, were explicitly developed by later students of history and its methods. The historian must have a sound, critical judgment which knows how to distinguish the true from the false, to discriminate between fact and fancy; an imagination which can reconstruct the past out of the disconnected *débris* of the fragmentary records; a sensitiveness which realizes the complexities and intricacies of the

psychological reactions of individuals and groups; a sympathy which can appreciate the sentiments and attitudes of the ancient past and especially the ethical ideals and religious faith recorded in the Bible.

All of this, it hardly need be said, presupposes much more than erudition. It involves a knowledge that goes far beyond ancient documents. It demands a living and comprehending insight into the whole life of the epoch involved. The real Jesus can be portrayed only by one who can himself live again in the land and among the people of Jesus. The external processes by which that ability may be employed and developed are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOIL OUT OF WHICH THE GOSPELS GREW

I. THE PALESTINIAN "MILIEU": THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IDEA

NOT MERELY situations and events, but also conditions must be considered in an adequate historical account. The term, "historical setting," or "background," is unsatisfactory if one is to conceive history as described in the previous chapter. It suggests a stage with its painted scenery which is intended to set off and explain the conduct of an actor or two. That was the original motive for the study of ancient history in connection with the Bible. The process by which this poor and unfruitful conception was changed for a dynamic and vital interpretation of biblical history is the theme of this chapter. The awkward title used conveys the correct idea.

The French word *milieu*, used in the sense of "environment," is better than "background" because more colourless. But the historical environment is not merely something which is around the chief actors or events. It is not merely the sunshine that gives them colour or contrast. It is the atmosphere they breathe, the soil out of which they grow. It provides a thousand impulses and stimuli against which they react. Along with the incalculable human element, it provides the causes of events. It does not merely explain the dictionary meaning of words and phrases, the otherwise unintelligible

allusions to social customs and thought categories which, in a written document or a man's speech, pique the curiosity. It also actually makes all of these basic elements in the thought and life of the individual and the social group. "Environment," unfortunately, does not suggest the historical process, but only contemporary accompaniments. In fact there is no single word which includes all of the various nuances of ideas which the historian must keep in mind when he is studying an individual or a social group in relation to society. The following discussion attempts to give further precision and richness to the concept.

All too often the subject has been neglected or superficially treated, doubtless partly because of an implicit or explicit assumption that Jesus was a man from heaven and totally unrelated to his environment except as he acted upon it. According to the explicit doctrine of orthodoxy, the historical background and all archæological information have value at most merely because they enable us better to understand the meaning of what is written. They have no organic or causal relation to the course of Jesus' life. The recognition of the narrowness and indefensibility of such a view sets the study of the historical circumstances of Jesus' life in an entirely new field of interest.¹

II. ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INTEREST

The interest in the history and customs of ancient times and the use of historical and archæological materials for the interpretation of the Bible are by no means exclusively modern. To no small extent the mind of the early Christians, to be sure, ran in other directions. The apocryphal Gospels, the early pilgrims, ancient chronicles, *onomastica*, or lists of names with explanations, and ancient commentators incidentally supply information of no little value. Medieval writers, such as Petrus

¹See above, Chap. VII, pp. 114 f.

Comestor, lives of Christ, such as that of Ludolf of Saxony, and books of devotion, such as Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, use the environment merely for dramatic effect, as do many modern accounts of Jesus.

The larger conception of history produced by the Renaissance, along with natural curiosity, produced works such as the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1655-67) of the Swiss Orientalist and church historian, Johann Heinrich Holtinger, which contains a truly remarkable pot-pourri of information on all sorts of Oriental subjects. A long-famous but less valuable work was Prideaux' *Connections*, as it was familiarly called, or more precisely, *The Old and New Testaments Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations from the Declension of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ* (1715-18), which begins in the year 747 B.C. with the death of "Sardanapulus" and runs to the crucifixion of Jesus in "Anno 33, Tiberius 19." It is arranged like a chronicle, year by year, but contains all manner of information in its two large volumes. It is largely concerned with political matters, as unfortunately histories always have been. But it at least pointed the way to better enterprises.

In Germany Herder, in his *Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1787), and in England Milman, with his *History of the Jews* (1829) and his *History of Christianity* (1840), set Jesus frankly into the stream of Jewish and Christian history. Milman specifically criticized "the isolation of the history of Christ in a kind of sacred seclusion" because of its "disconnecting his life from the general history of mankind, of which it forms an integral and essential part." He undertook "to trace the effect which each separate incident, and the whole course of the life of Jesus, may be supposed to have produced upon the popular mind," all with "a perpetual reference to the circumstances of the times, the habits and the national character of the people, and the state of public feeling." Jesus, be it noted,

was still above history. Otherwise the purpose and content of modern history could hardly be stated in clearer fashion. Renan's "brilliant but hollow romance," the *History of the Origins of Christianity* (1863-83) popularized the idea of Jesus' connection with history in France. Histories of the people of Israel by Ewald, Graetz, Stade, and now a host of others treat Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity as a natural development out of Jewish history. Today no life of Jesus is complete without at least a survey of his times, including something of Jewish history and society; every history of Christianity begins with his life.

III. THE HISTORY OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

The Swabian, Matthias Schneckenburger (1804-48), student and tutor in the Tübingen *Stift* just before Strauss's time and long professor at Bern, was the first to use the title, "the history of New Testament times." His lectures popularized the subject with generations of students, who eventually published them in 1862.

Six years later, in 1868, Adolf Hausrath (1837-1909), for thirty-five years professor of New Testament exegesis and church history at Heidelberg, began the publication of a work with the same title. Then in 1874 appeared the first small edition of a work which, in its field, has supplanted all others, Emil Schürer's *Manual of the History of New Testament Times*, called in the second and succeeding editions the *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. In theology Schürer (1844-1910) inherited the influences that came down from Schleiermacher, Baur, and Richard Rothe, and he eventually became a Ritschlian. He was one of those whom Harnack dubbed "the unchanged," since he reached an early maturity which allowed little room for growth. Fortunately for the field and type of work here under discussion, that did not greatly matter. He early recognized the importance of the relation between Judaism and primitive Christianity and con-

tinued assembling materials until the fourth edition of his great history was finished, only a year before his death. Unfortunately, the five volumes of the English translation (1891), made from the second edition, lack a mass of important source materials which he gathered during the two subsequent decades. To this great reference work one turns for information on all possible subjects having to do with Palestine and Judaism in the first century of the Christian era.

IV. THE "HISTORY OF RELIGIONS" SCHOOL

Strangely enough, Schürer neglected one part, and a most important part of his field, the religious and ethical ideas. That lack was filled by Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1919) in his *Religion of Judaism in the New Testament Period* (1901), of which a third edition was published by Hugo Gressmann in 1926, a magnificent collection of materials, but deficient in the use of rabbinic literature. Bousset's life was almost entirely devoted to the history of religion. His commentaries and other works, such as his *Jesus*, are dominated by the spirit of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which regards all religion as a part of the historical process and, with all due reverence, treats Christianity and Jesus as it treats other religions and their founders.

The point of view of the history of religions has been of tremendous importance in the search for the historical Jesus.² It brings to a climax a new conception of the task of historical criticism, particularly as applied to the interpretation of his life and teachings. Schneckenburger added an account of Jewish religion only as an appendix. Aside from its organization, outward forms, and literature Schürer omitted it. Both were moved to write by a desire to explain the New Testament. Schneckenburger wished also to explain out of the cir-

²See above, Chap. V, pp. 84 f.

cumstances of the time why Christianity had succeeded. As against Hegel and Bruno Bauer, who represented the Roman world as inwardly near dissolution, he presented it as merely dissatisfied and longing for redemption. Therefore, it accepted first Judaism, and then, much more avidly, Christianity, because they met its needs. Hausrath tried to give a connected history of society in all its parts and relations, but he was less the historian than the literary artist who pictured individuals and events in their immediate surroundings, without due emphasis upon the larger problems of historical cause and effect. Schneckenburger was concerned to depict the world to which Christianity was offered, Schürer and Oskar Holtzmann, the world out of which Christianity arose. This last is the essential element in the religio-historical point of view.

It is impossible here even to sketch the development of the history of religions as a special field of study. Its beginnings fall in the period of romanticism, with Herder as a chief and worthy exponent. Its real fruits have begun to appear only in the twentieth century. As applied to the Bible and especially the New Testament, the new method had and still has to meet no little resistance of apathy and inertia, if nothing worse, from those whose minds are occupied with the more mechanical, less taxing, and less "dangerous" processes of textual and literary criticism. But, as cuneiform materials became more and more abundant, it became perfectly clear that a large part of the legends of the Old Testament were adaptations of stories similar to those of Nineveh and Babylon. Hermann Gunkel's *Creation and Chaos in the End and at the Beginning* (1895) made full use of these Babylonian materials to explain the Hebrew myths of the creation and the end of the world. Wilhelm Bousset showed how similar parallels could be applied to the interpretation of the Antichrist legend (1895) and the Book of Revelation (1896). Gunkel's *Activities of the Holy Spirit According to the Popular View* (1888) and then

especially his *Toward a Religio-historical Understanding of the New Testament* (1903), along with Heinrich Zimmern's much wilder Pan-Babylonian theories and Alfred Jeremias' *Babylonian Material in the New Testament* (1905), for example, tended to arouse orthodox resentment and popular fear, while at the same time they pointed the way to numerous fruitful enterprises on the part of younger scholars. In certain special fields discoveries of epoch-making importance were made and slowly—all too slowly—revealed to the public. What Jewish and early Christian eschatology, to be discussed below, owed to Persia is a case in point.

Probably no subject has profited more from the comparative study of religions than that of the belief in miracles and kindred superstitions. When once it comes to be recognized that almost every heathen shrine boasted its miracles, that stories of miraculous healings were told of almost every heathen deity and semidivine hero, and also that the Jewish rabbis worked miracles by calling upon divine aid, while Jewish and other Oriental exorcists and miracle-mongers were famous all over the Roman Empire, the problem of the Gospel miracles is subjected to a new illumination. The form-history problem—whether the Gospel miracle stories are Jewish or Hellenistic—becomes acute.³ When the light from modern psychiatric studies is added, the problem is placed in a setting which throws both supernaturalistic and rationalistic explanations out of court. Strauss with his mythical interpretation was nearer the true solution, but he had made only a beginning. The method applies to formulas such as "in his name," to the sacraments, to the laying on of hands in ordination, and to similar rites, but these belong to the apostolic age rather than to the life of Jesus.

Certain phases of the study of religions have proved to be false starts. There was a time when solar and astral mythology

³See below, Chap. XI.

was all the fashion. Its discoveries solved all of the problems of religious origins. Every great character in ancient legend and history was supposed to be a solar or astral deity. Comparative mythology was the earlier stage of comparative religions and led to the history of religions. The ancient mythologies of Babylon, Egypt, and Greece easily suggested that the cults of deities and heroes were really cults of the heavenly bodies, and the conclusion seemed natural that here were the roots of all religion. Dupuis and Volney, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, represented Jesus as a mythical figure put together out of various solar and astral myths, and Jensen, who, at the beginning of the twentieth, found practically all of the characters of the Bible in the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, may serve as illustrations of methods which have since come to full exploitation in the modern Christ-myth theories.⁴ In essence, Strauss's method was the same and his error the same, an illogical logic. But, in spite of mistakes, the religio-historical method has made real discoveries and has contributed notably to the progress of the last hundred years.

V. THE GEOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE

In the field of Palestinian historical geography, the first great step, first because most fundamental, was taken just one hundred years ago by the American scholar, Edward Robinson (1794-1863). With an excellent philological and historical preparation, he spent two periods of three months each in intensive travel and observation in Palestine (1838, 1852) and, after the first, two years in Berlin working up the results. Throwing aside "monkish tradition" and placing his dependence on ancient documents and local Arabic tradition, he revolutionized the study of Palestinian topography. In the light of more recent studies and the recent flood of data from ex-

⁴See above, Chap. V, pp. 73, 78.

cavation, his results must not infrequently be revised. Moreover, it must be recognized that many problems are insoluble because of the scantiness of the literary data and the disappearance of the archæological evidence. Yet that does not lessen the value of Robinson's contribution to methods of Palestinian research.

There are decided difficulties in using geographical materials in the search for the real Jesus. The researches of Robinson and all who follow in his train apply more to the Old Testament than to the New. Jesus' life and teachings have much less of local circumstance than do the Old Testament records. Some of the topographical questions of the most serious significance for Jesus' life have not yet been settled and perhaps never can be settled because excavation is impossible. That Nazareth existed in Jesus' day seems fairly well established by accidental discoveries, in the immediate neighbourhood, of tombs of relevant date, yet the evidence is not beyond dispute. As to the place of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, no conclusions will be possible for generations because the archæological materials for the solution of the problem lie deep under the buildings of the old city. Robinson went wrong in his identification of Bethsaida, not only because archæological evidence was wanting, but also because he lacked the solution of the Synoptic problem which explains the inconsistencies of the narratives. In many other topographical questions, the literary criticism of the Gospels sets the geographical data in a new light. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the Gospels give no adequate basis for following the journeys of Jesus. The elaborate itineraries concocted by harmonizing the four or even the three synoptic Gospels misrepresent the real Jesus and dissipate religious interest.⁵ But this does not mean that

⁵See McCown, "The Problem of the Site of Bethsaida," *Journal Palest. Or. Soc.*, X (1930), 32-58; "The Last Journey of Jesus," *Journal Bib. Lit.*, LI (1932), 107-29; "The Geography of Luke's Central Section," *ibid.*, LVII (1938), 51-66.

the search for the historical personage can neglect the materials which the auxiliary science has to offer.

What is needed for an understanding of Jesus is a new conception of geography. Human and economic geography, anthropogeography, a study of all of the relations of man to the land and of the land to man, and a knowledge of the economic conditions under which man lived in first-century Palestine, will do more to make clear the actual meaning of Jesus' life and teachings than any amount of topographical study. It does not matter where Jesus was born and died. What sort of life he lived and what sort of people he addressed do matter. Such information tells what his words meant, when, for example, he said, "Blessed are you poor," and "Woe to you rich." Aside from preoccupation with military affairs, Sir George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (1894) renders admirable service. Probably no one will ever surpass the Scottish seer of the eighteen-nineties in his ability to make the land live before the reader's eyes and to make the words of the Bible live in contact with the soil out of which they grew. But even he deals more with the Old Testament than with the Gospels, and his contribution is more inspirational than scientific and critical. For the interpretation of Jesus there is still much to learn.

VI. ARCHÆOLOGY

Still other tasks await the student. The geography of the land, much as it contributes, cannot tell all about a people. Archæology, in its full sense as the study of all of the antiquities of the land, must be thoroughly exploited. In general, three lines of approach may be followed. First, there must be excavation in the land itself to discover how the ancients lived. Unfortunately, aside from synagogues, all of more recent date than the time of Jesus, almost no excavation has been carried on, outside of a little in Jerusalem, to throw light on Jewish

life in the first part of the first century. Nothing is now so necessary as the uncovering of several Jewish villages in Galilee, such as Kerazeh, Khirbet Qana, and Irbid, for example. The excavation of Hellenistic cities, such as Sebastieh, Jerash, and Askalon, has been exhibiting another most significant side of first-century Palestine, and, if prosecuted further, may throw unexpected light on the beginnings of the church and indirectly on the life of Jesus. Saffurieh should serve both purposes.⁶

Observation of the habits and customs of the modern Palestinian peasant is a source of much-needed information which will soon be at an end. This again offers as much for the Old Testament as for the New. Life so primitive and near the soil as that of the modern Arab is, or was until recently, cannot have changed greatly even in three thousand years. Therefore the reports of observant travellers, from Henry Maundrel in 1697 down to Henry van Dyke and Harry Emerson Fosdick, have their value if properly sifted and applied. The incoming of the Greeks and the building of their cities in ancient Palestine has a parallel in the much more artificial and socially—not to say politically—disturbing influx of Zionists today. Materials from this second source are abundant, but unfortunately there exists in English no recent, critically prepared work which puts together the social background of Jesus' life. The economic situation is too summarily treated in Frederick C. Grant's valuable little book on *The Economic Background of the Gospels* (1926). Here are wide areas which are just as inviting as Synoptic criticism, but they drag the scholar out of his study into unfamiliar and in part untrodden fields that require unwonted physical and intellectual exertion.

The third line of approach to the history and antiquities of the Jews is through their ancient literatures. The first two lines of investigation cannot properly be prosecuted without

⁶See above, Chap. VII, pp. 113 f.

the third, nor the third, it hardly need be said, without the other two. The first and indispensable preparation for an understanding of the New Testament is an adequate knowledge of the social and religious history which produced the Old Testament and is recorded in it. But that is not enough. The later literature is even more necessary. It is a field that has long been cultivated. The modern scholar owes much to men like the Buxtorfs, father and son, and John Lightfoot of the seventeenth century, to Guelielmus Van Surenhuysen, Christian Schottgen, and J. J. Wettstein of the eighteenth, and to many others, who have laboriously collected masses of valuable materials from Jewish writings. But the task is enormous and difficult, and too few have attempted it. Indeed, it may be said that, until recently, later Jewish literature has been to Christian scholars largely a neglected and even an unknown field. But within the last half-century progress has been made. The subject has two main divisions: (1) that which belongs to normative Judaism and was written and preserved largely in Hebrew and Aramaic; and (2) that which was eventually rejected by official Judaism, but was preserved by the Christian church, mainly in translation, and which is often grouped loosely and inaccurately under the titles, "apocrypha and pseudepigrapha."

VII. ARAMAIC

As to the first of the two fields just mentioned, progress in the study of Aramaic has made two contributions: it has shown the way back to the original language of Jesus, and to the understanding of certain crucial phrases in the Gospels, and, what is not quite the same thing, it has assisted toward distinguishing and understanding certain linguistic and literary phenomena in the Gospels which are recognized as derived from Aramaic oral tradition, if not from documents written in Aramaic.

It was once argued that Jesus habitually spoke the Greek language. The apologetic value of the possession of Jesus' words in the language in which they were originally spoken is obvious if one wishes to take them as verbally inspired. Then the Sermon on the Mount in Greek would become an incontrovertible law—a conclusion exactly contrary to the spirit of Jesus' teachings. Fortunately no such conclusion is possible.⁷

As long ago as 1896, when Arnold Meyer, then a *Privatdozent* at Bonn, published his *Jesus' Mother Language*, the question was definitely settled in favour of Aramaic as against Hebrew and, of course, Greek. Jesus doubtless spoke Greek, as did the vast majority of Palestinians, but not as his mother tongue. But it must be remembered that the vast majority of Palestinians, even including Greek immigrants in the Hellenistic cities, would have spoken Aramaic, just as today the vast majority, aside from those affected by Zionist propaganda in favour of its artificial Hebrew or those driven by economic considerations to English, speak Arabic.

Meyer went beyond the proof of the fact that Jesus' mother tongue was Aramaic. He discussed also the use of the Galilean dialect for the interpretation of Jesus' teachings. About the same time, Gustaf Dalman, then a *Privatdozent* at Leipzig, now, after long years in Palestine, an emeritus at Greifswald, published a series of works on Palestinian Aramaic, including *The Words of Jesus* (1898, E. T., 1902). Since then it must be laid down as settled that no scholar can speak with authority on the interpretation of Jesus' words unless he can intelligently follow the discussion of their original Aramaic form.

The latest phase of the Aramaic problem turns back to the troublesome question, In what language were the Gospels written? No one would deny that the earliest tradition must have been Aramaic. The moot question is, How quickly did Hel-

⁷See above, Chap. VII, pp. 114 f.

lenists like Stephen, Philip, and Paul put the Gospel into Greek and how far did they change it in so doing? Both questions come up for discussion in another connection and, therefore, must be passed by here.⁸

VIII. RABBINIC LITERATURE

A field closely related in language and subject matter to the one just considered is that of rabbinic and scribal literature. In this direction beginnings had already been made almost in the time of the Reformation. The most notable work in the seventeenth century was John Lightfoot's *Horae Hebraicae* (1663-78); in the eighteenth, Wettstein's great commentary on the New Testament (1751-52), which quoted rabbinic as well as Greek parallels to the sayings of the New Testament. An example of nineteenth-century research is the work of Alfred Edersheim (1825-89), converted Jew and Oxford lecturer, who used the familiarity with the Talmud acquired when he was a boy to write his *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Jesus* (1876) and to produce, in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883), an interpretation of Jesus in the light of supposedly contemporary materials. But Edersheim, like most of his predecessors and contemporaries, was uncritical as to both the Gospels and the Talmud. Such work has no enduring value.

Unfortunately the Talmud was not contemporary with Jesus. The oldest part was written perhaps two hundred years later, and much of it, including a large part of its references to Jesus, is so late as to have no value at all for his time. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation as a political entity in 70 A.D. made so complete a change in all of the circumstances of Jewish life and thought that only a very careful sifting can collect the materials from rabbis contemporary with Jesus, and only sifted material is historically valu-

⁸See below, Chap. IX, pp. 164 ff., Chap. X, pp. 173 ff.

able. Even the great work of George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Three Centuries of the Christian Era* (1927, 1930), universally praised for accomplishing, as even no Jewish scholar has done, what it set out to do, is a picture of normative Judaism in the time of the Mishna. It cannot be used as a picture of the time of Jesus.

To take but one example, Moore gives very little attention to the apocalyptic movement which, in the first century, must have been extremely active, but which ceased to agitate Judaism for a time after the Bar-Cochba rebellion. Moore was perfectly correct for the time he was portraying, but not for Jesus' time. Yet it was out of the apocalyptic movement that Christianity arose. Another serious mistake, due to the same difficulty, vitiates the majority of the discussions of the trial of Jesus. The Talmud reveals how the rabbis of 250 A.D. thought such a case should have been tried, but there are no records as to the procedure of the Sanhedrin in 30 A.D. All that the rabbis report concerning the times of the second temple must be used with great caution.

Both Jewish and Christian scholars are attempting to disentangle the various strata of the Talmud. Joseph Klausner, now of Jerusalem, who has produced one of the best lives of Jesus despite its Jewish point of view in theology, has given the greater part of his life to this period beginning with his Heidelberg dissertation on *Jewish Messianic Ideas in the Tannaitic Period* (1904). Other Jews have made notable contributions, for example, Solomon Schechter, Alexander Kohut, I. Abrahams, and Claude Montefiore. The outstanding work of reference is Paul Billerbeck's *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash* (1922-28), to which Hermann L. Strack (1848-1922) lent the weight of his name. It contains a mass of material which, on the whole, has been critically sifted and is available for use, to those who read German. Much more remains to be done in editing and inter-

preting the Talmudic and midrashic literature. Recently among Christians, Oskar Holtzmann and Gerhard Kittel have been leading the task.

Out of the study of first-century Judaism there has arisen a sharp clash of opinion between Jewish and Christian scholars. The matter first came to the fore because of Schürer's altogether too sweeping condemnation of Jewish religion in Jesus' day as "a fearful burden, . . . a continual torment to the earnest man."⁹ The last thirty years have seen a complete change come over both Jewish and Christian attitudes. The fairness and the scholarship of men like Montefiore, Abrahams, Schechter, and Klausner have disarmed Christian suspicion and won Christian admiration, while the same qualities in Christian scholars such as Gustaf Dalman, R. Travers Herford, and George Foot Moore have satisfied Jewish sensibilities that prejudice does not fully predetermine the conclusions of Christian students. Indeed, the pendulum has swung so far back that some, Herford and Riddle, for example, have been willing to attribute nearly all of the condemnation of legalism which the Gospels put into the mouth of Jesus to apostolic polemic against persecuting Judaism. It may be granted that the injury and opposition which the early Christians suffered during the period when the Gospel traditions were taking shape must inevitably have tinted the portrait of the Pharisees with unduly lurid colors. But all religions, including modern Christianity, sooner or later develop people of exactly the character ascribed to the Pharisees in the Gospels. Jews have no reason to feel sensitive on that score. The Pharisees were not all of Judaism. No doubt there were great numbers of truly devout Jews. Otherwise Christianity would have had no soil in which to grow. But the beginnings of Christianity are historically inexplicable if there were no Pharisees of the kind

⁹*Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3d ed., II, 579; E. T., Div. II, Vol. II, pp. 124 f.

which the Gospels portray. They are the villains necessary to the plot. Moreover, the literature of religion would be sadly impoverished without Jesus' denunciations of such characters.

Although no little progress has been made, many important questions are still in debate. Upon which Jewish documents should most reliance be placed in describing Judaism in Jesus' day? Jewish scholars like Montefiore prefer the rabbinic writings and claim that Christians turn to the apocalypses because they are so much easier to read and understand than the Talmud. Kittel criticizes Bousset's *Religion of Judaism* for too largely ignoring the rabbinic sources and painting a picture taken mainly from apocalyptic literature.¹⁰ Even if such a criticism of Bousset is partially justified, there can be no doubt that the discovery and interpretation of the Jewish apocalyptic literature constitute one of the long strides which the last century took toward a better understanding of Jesus, and that, at the same time, this literature has raised many of the most difficult problems the interpreter of Jesus has had to face.

IX. APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Extra-canonical Jewish apocalypses were by no means unknown to Western scholarship a century ago. In the Apocrypha as usually printed in English and in an appendix to the Latin Vulgate a Second Esdras, or Fourth Ezra, often appears. It had been in use in the Christian church from the earliest times and had often been regarded as an inspired book of prophecy. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, one of the most important of the Jewish noncanonical writings because of parallels to the sayings of Jesus, had also long been known, as had the Sibylline Oracles.

However, knowledge of this side of Jewish thinking entered upon a new phase in 1821, when Richard Lawrence issued a translation of a Bodleian manuscript in Ethiopic of the Apoca-

¹⁰*Probleme des palest. Spätjudentums*, 5 f., 26.

lypse of Enoch which the traveller, James Bruce, had brought to England in 1773. It was the very book which the Epistle of Jude quoted. It contained references to an "Elect One," and a "Son of man," who was to remove kings and the mighty from their seats and who was to be the light of the Gentiles. He went with the "Head of days" just as in Daniel a Son of man appears on the clouds of heaven with the "Ancient of days." He was evidently Judge, Revealer, and righteous Ruler, the Saviour of Israel, God's Anointed. It was hard to deny that the picture combined numerous traits that appeared in the Christian conception of Jesus as the messiah. Another clearly drawn picture of an earthly but superman messiah was already known from the Psalms of Solomon (first printed in 1626) and a confused picture of a heavenly messiah from Fourth Ezra.

These and other messianic conceptions came more and more to fascinate and perplex students of the Gospels as the various documents which described the messiah and the kingdom of God were studied and published. The problem as to what the terms messiah and kingdom of heaven actually meant to Jesus and his disciples became one of the outstanding questions of New Testament scholarship. The discovery of striking parallels among the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, and even Greeks, with clear evidence of Hebrew borrowing, added new difficulties for conservative interpreters. Volumes by Adolf Hilgenfeld in 1857, James Drummond in 1877, R. H. Charles in 1899, and Paul Volz in 1903 (revised in 1933) are some of the milestones along the path of progress. Hugo Gressmann made important contributions in seeking to discover the *Origin of Israelite-Jewish Eschatology* (1905), a work rewritten and posthumously published as *The Messiah* (1929). The materials were made accessible to nonspecialists in German by Emil Kautzsch and others in 1800, by Gressmann in 1909 (revised 1926-27), and by Charles, with numerous collaborators, in English in 1913.

In view of these publications of the materials in translation and of the appearance of innumerable studies of single phases of the subject and of the development of Jewish and Christian eschatology as a whole, there is now no excuse on the part of any one for ignorance as to the nature of the problem, but the complexity of the materials and the difficulty of their interpretation make wide differences of opinion inevitable. It is one of the most complicated and perplexing subjects within the whole range of New Testament studies, and the difficulty is all the greater because it is the very heart of the problem of Jesus' character and purpose.

It can no longer be thought that the Jews harboured no such hopes, as was once maintained. Joseph Klausner, if no other, settled that question in his doctoral dissertation of 1904. Among the Jews there was an almost infinite variety of opinion as to the nature of the anticipated kingdom of God and messiah. It is perfectly clear that Christianity was a messianic movement which took its rise in an unorthodox section of Judaism and which was hostile to rabbinism, partly because, in contrast to "normative Judaism," it was strongly apocalyptic in temper and laid great emphasis on eschatology in the sense of the expectation of an imminent coming of the new reign of God to earth. But just where did Jesus stand with regard to these questions? It is no longer possible to adopt allegorizing or spiritualizing interpretations of his language. But what he actually said and what he meant are questions which still divide scholarship into various camps. The subject is subsequently to be considered at greater length, for a part at least of his meaning can be discovered.

X. MYSTICISM

The soil out of which the Gospels grew includes also Hellenism and therefore the whole world of the Near East. How far non-Jewish philosophical notions, magic, and mysticism

taken from the Oriental mystery religions and the widely prevalent gnostic theosophy of that day have affected the primitive accounts of Jesus' life are questions which at the moment are in the forefront of New Testament studies. How far was Palestinian Judaism affected by these external currents? The soil out of which Jesus and his religion grew was Palestinian soil. Its odour must adhere to all that is authentically his. Other soil must adhere to roots that have taken their nourishment in other lands. The chemical analysis of the soils on the roots of this or that conceptual growth and the discovery of the countries from which each came are among the fascinating subjects which have to be considered in the study of the Gospels, and especially of the fourth Gospel, which comes next on the list of problems.

PART IV

THE SEARCH FOR TRUSTWORTHY
SOURCES

SUMMARY

IX. The fourth Gospel is historically of the greatest importance since its striking characteristics colour all harmonistic portraits of Jesus which use it and neutralize the more delicate shades of the synoptic Gospels. Aside from Baur, Strauss, and Reuss, practically all scholars, both conservative and progressive, fully accepted it as historically valuable until about 1865. Beginning with Schenkel, Keim, and H. J. Holtzmann, the fashion gradually changed. In spite of the conservative positions of Bishop J. B. Lightfoot and William Sanday, through the influence of German and French scholars, through that of Edwin A. Abbott and Baron von Hügel in England, and of B. W. Bacon and E. F. Scott in America, the Gospel has come to be regarded as a mystical reinterpretation of Jesus' meaning to the world with, at best, only a small substratum of genuine historical reminiscence.

X. The Synoptic Gospels, therefore, remain the only dependable source for a knowledge of Jesus. The careful study of agreements and disagreements among them has led to the rejection of numerous theories: that they are independent witnesses to Jesus' life; that there was an original common tradition, either oral or written; that they were written in Aramaic; that they were composed of a number of written fragments; or that they were written to propagate individual and opposite "tendencies." Some hypothesis of mutual use is to be adopted. The one now most widely held is the "two-document theory," that Matthew and Luke used Mark and also a teachings source. As yet no attempt to discover other important sources or to analyze Mark into separate sources has commanded wide assent. That there was a single "second source" is doubted by some.

XI. As the study of the literary problem presented by the Synoptic Gospels reached a stalemate because of lack of definite data, it became evident that these Gospels and their sources could not be assumed to offer first-hand materials for a picture of Jesus. Back of them lay the oral tradition of the primitive Christian

community. Form history undertook to analyze the various types of myth, legend, anecdote, and narrative in the Gospels in order to determine, with the aid of criticism by social environment, what definitely belonged to Jesus' Palestinian surroundings and thus to isolate the historical elements. The results of these studies are still *sub judice*. It is evident that no biography of Jesus and no geographical or chronological outline of his ministry are possible. But still there is sufficient authentic material for portraying his character and for determining the main outlines of his ethics and religion.

CHAPTER IX

MYSTICISM OR HISTORY THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE REAL JESUS

I. THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

It is hardly necessary to say that, before any attempt can be made to determine what manner of man Jesus was, it is essential to discover what trustworthy information about him is available. The fundamental problem is the sources, their extent and their dependability. It need not be argued that there is no significant material outside the four canonical Gospels. The Talmud and the Greek and Latin allusions to Jesus have nothing original to offer. Theoretically the apocryphal Gospels may deserve consideration, but it requires very little reading in them to convince any one that, except for what parallels or uses the canonical tradition, they are pure fiction. The New Testament outside the Gospels adds no particulars of significance. Only the four Gospels are left. The first problem, one which emerged as soon as historical criticism turned toward the Gospels, was whether the four were equally valuable and could be combined, or, as Baur insisted, a choice must be made between them; and, if so, whether the first three or the fourth should be taken as definitive.

The most dangerous and delicate problem which the student has to face is the criticism of the fourth Gospel. Any question-

ing of the apostle of love seems peculiarly liable to breed hate. Probably no book in the Bible appeals so strongly to the simple and pious believers who make up the largest element in the Protestant churches. It is a touchstone by which the heresy hunter detects his victims. The portrait of Jesus which hangs before the minds of the vast majority of both Christians and non-Christians is probably that which the fourth Gospel paints. This has been more pronouncedly true in pietistic countries, but not alone there by any means. The book's extraordinary influence is due to the striking fact which Baur mentioned: If it be agreed that all of the Gospels are equally valuable as historical sources and that they can be harmonized, then, in the mixture, the colours of the fourth Gospel are so strong that they neutralize the rest and make the whole Johannine.¹ A century ago the trustworthiness of that Gospel was accepted with complete confidence. But now a very different conclusion is reached. If the Gospels are of equal historical value, if John is as trustworthy a source as the Synoptics, then, so it is widely held, there are no reliable sources for Jesus' life. The portrait which has aroused deep and reverential love has aroused equally deep and honest aversion.

II. THE HARMONISTIC THEORY

The fundamental problem, then, for the student of the life of Jesus is whether harmonization can be justified? Are discrepancies and contradictions to be explained away, and does the fourth Gospel portray the real Jesus? Tatian, about 170 A.D., wove them all together into his gospel "through four," the *Diatessaron*. On the basis of the Ammonian sections and the Eusebian canons Augustine proved, so he and subsequent ages thought, that Mark was the follower and abbreviator of Matthew, while Matthew and John, as Jesus' disciples, deserved a higher authority.

¹See above, p. 94.

The Protestant doctrine of scriptural inspiration and infallibility made the problem much more difficult. The Catholic could choose between the accounts. Not so the Protestant, if he was logical and consistent. The *Harmonia evangelica* of Andrew Osiander (1498-1552), for example, had Jairus' daughter raised from the dead three times in order to account for the various forms of the story. Osiander's successors were usually less rigorous, but Chemnitz, Bengel, and all their followers down to Conrad Noel commit the same errors in principle, and they inevitably adopt the Johannine chronology and something of the Johannine tone. Practically all harmonizers follow Clement of Alexandria in supposing that John corrects and completes the other three and is, therefore, the final authority. They fail to see that, when Clement called it a "spiritual" Gospel, he meant that it was allegorical rather than historical. Its positive claims to the authority of an eyewitness, Jesus' high claims to divine Sonship and equality with God, the clear outline of Jesus' life, its Occidental, Hellenistic, anti-Jewish atmosphere, and its strong strain of mysticism, which appealed to Herder and Schleiermacher, have given the book an almost inescapable charm and unquestioned authority. Uncritical Christianity, if it is not Hebraic, is likely to be Johannine.

III. JOHANNINE CRITICISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Doubts on the subject can hardly be said to have been seriously considered before the appearance of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*. Yet Evanson, in his *Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists* (1792) called attention to its clear and grammatical Greek and its Platonic philosophy, as well as its internal inconsistencies and its contradictions of the other three. In 1820 General Superintendent Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider of Gotha, a keen critic and a highly influential churchman, raised a storm by his tentative Latin essay, "*Pro-*

babilia concerning the nature and origin of the Gospel and Epistles of John the Apostle, modestly subjected to the judgment of the learned." He discovered almost every argument which has ever been used against the book. The refutations of his doubts were so unanimous and vociferous that four years later he withdrew his impious conjectures. This unfortunate defeat for criticism plus Schleiermacher's stout defense of traditional views almost won the book immunity from serious attack.

One might describe Strauss's attack on the fourth Gospel as merely a hasty raid by a force which had another objective. Yet his reasoning was thoroughly logical. The predominance of the theological and apologetic motive, which selected, created, and arranged the material, and the influence of Greek ideas not only proved the book's late origin, but its lesser historical value.

Much more thorough was the discussion to which F. C. Baur subjected the Gospel.² The fourth Gospel was clearly a document in which the supposed history centered around a dominating idea, or "tendency." The alteration of the Synoptic geography threw the whole historical development into confusion. The discourses ascribed to Jesus might be denied all historical value. The work, so Baur maintained, could not have been written until late in the second century; it was not by an apostle, and it had little historical value for the life of Jesus. The "pragmatism" which appealed to Schleiermacher he found unhistorical.

Many details of the Tübingen criticism of the fourth Gospel have had to be modified, but nothing has been discovered to change their basic claim that the Gospel represents a peculiar tendency, a thoroughly one-sided interpretation of Jesus, and that it cannot be regarded as an authentic historical source for his life in preference to the Synoptics. This is one matter

²See above, pp. 94 and 150.

in which the findings of the Tübingen school have stood the test of time.

Their views, however, were very slow in gaining acceptance. The thirty years following Strauss's *Leben Jesu* saw a gradual modification of opinion on both sides. In the beginning far more scholars stood manfully for the full trustworthiness of the fourth Gospel than agreed with its critics. As Bernhard Weiss said, "Through Schleiermacher the Gospel again became the special favourite of modern theology; and, out of love for it, the Synoptics had to suffer much unreasonable neglect."⁸ As time went on, the force of the critical arguments began to tell. In a series of works running from 1840 to 1888 the great Strasbourg scholar, Eduard Reuss, took a position, in opposition to Baur, to be sure, but not in the least for the historicity of the fourth Gospel. It was indirectly apostolic, the apostle John being the source of the discourses, though not the author of the book. The Prologue was "not the preface of a historian, but the thesis of a theologian." His chief interests are "not facts, preserved in memory, . . . but ideas begotten of speculation, conceived of feeling, and born of faith."

Yet, in all probability, the great majority of scholars in Europe, England, and America would have subscribed to the jubilant boast of Professor Woolsey of Yale in the late sixties "that the assault of the hostile critics on the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel was . . . already successfully overcome, that the question in the controversy might be regarded as finally settled." So Schleiermacher had thought, most mistakenly, thirty years before. And the pendulum was now swinging again.

A generation later William Sanday could repeat the same jubilant note. However, not all criticism had accepted defeat. Karl Theodor Keim's learned and artistic *History of Jesus of Nazara* (1867-72), by rejecting the fourth Gospel as dogmatic,

⁸*Manual of Introduction to the New Testament*, New York, 1899, II, 390.

had actually begun a new, skeptical era. Following Keim, representative scholars such as Hase, Sabatier, Renan, and Schenkel altered their views and became less favourable to its historicity, and many, such as Schenkel, H. J. Holtzmann, Albrecht Thoma, Oscar Holtzmann, Otto Pfeiderer, and Adolf Harnack admitted its doctrinal, nonhistorical character. In England Walter Richard Cassels' famous three volumes on *Supernatural Religion* (1874, 1877) and still more Edwin A. Abbott's liberal, not to say critical, article on the "Gospels" in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1879) had no small influence. However, this is only a part of the story of criticism. The Gospel's apologetic character has been emphasized by many. Baldensperger (1898) thought it directed against the followers of John the Baptist, the later Mandæans. P. C. Sense (1899) argued that it was a Gnostic work later revised to render it orthodox. Johannes Kreyenbühl (1900-1905) tried to prove that it was the work of the Gnostic, Menander of Antioch, who had attacked the ideas of the bodily resurrection, the parousia, and the final judgment. Later, so he said, it was revised to conform to the common views of the church and attributed to John the Apostle.

IV. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1900-1937

One has but to glance at the table of contents and bibliography in Professor Wilbert Francis Howard's fascinating Fernley Lectures, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (1931), to appreciate how impossible it is to summarize in a few pages the progress which has been made in Johannine criticism during the period he covers, the first thirty years of the twentieth century. It is equally impossible to picture adequately the completeness of the change in opinion. It may be well to state at the outset that, during this period, a large portion of the scholarly world has returned to what is practically Baur's estimate of the historical value of

the fourth Gospel, although it is far from accepting his idea of the place of the Gospel in Christian history.

At the beginning conservatism reigned, especially in England. Lightfoot had claimed the Gospel of John as the great citadel of the Christian faith. The great commentaries of Brooke Foss Westcott, both equally conservative, appeared, on the English text in 1879, on the Greek in 1908. The articles by T. B. Strong and H. R. Reynolds in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (1900) made out an apparently unassailable case for the Johannine authorship and full historicity, and they exercised an unfortunate influence upon all of the English-speaking world. In 1903, the eminent English Unitarian, James Drummond, principal of Manchester College, Oxford; in 1904, Vincent Henry Stanton, later Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge; and, in 1904, William Sanday, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, in his Morse lectures delivered at Union Theological Seminary, New York, all appeared in the lists as champions of Johannine authorship, although Drummond doubted the Gospel's essential historicity.

In the first of his Morse lectures, Sanday gave a survey of recent literature on the Gospel. Having mentioned representatives of conservative opinion and of mediating and partition theories, he listed those who uncompromisingly rejected the fourth Gospel—H. J. Holtzmann, his younger cousin, Oskar Holtzmann, Adolf Jülicher, and, of course, Otto Pfeiderer. Finally he turned to the "recent reaction" in favour of Johannine authorship. Here he could mention James Drummond and V. H. Stanton, these two and no more. But "a single book," Principal Drummond's, had "dispelled the clouds and cleared the air."

Dialectically considered, it was then easy for Sanday to place himself upon the supposedly rising flood of conservative opinion and go on to prove that the author was a Palestinian and an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, and, in all probability, John

the apostle. Yet, even for Sanday, the discourses were a combination of history and interpretation, as they are for Zahn and practically every recent conservative scholar.

Sanday was strangely optimistic in view of the very qualified support which Drummond's cloud-dispelling book gave to the historicity of the fourth Gospel. As Sanday saw the tides of criticism, he was possibly justified in thinking that conservative opinion was on the increase. Actually he was entirely wrong. He himself remarked that a large group of younger German scholars were among those who favoured absolute rejection. Jean Réville (1901) had completely demonstrated its allegorical character, with arguments Sanday could not appreciate. In other words, the conservative reaction to Tübingen criticism had spent itself and a new wave of radicalism was coming in. On it eventually Sanday himself was carried to a complete reversal of opinion.⁴

Sanday's lectures may be said to have been the last great conservative discussion of the Gospel. J. H. Bernard's commentary in the *International Critical* series, published in 1929, would have been a great work if it had appeared thirty years earlier. It cannot be taken as representing modern opinion, even in English-speaking countries. Bernard himself is far from orthodox. Perhaps the worst feature of his interpretation is his retreat to the poorest type of rationalistic transmutation of the miracles: Lazarus, e.g., was awakened from a deathlike trance. Such a method satisfies neither progressive nor conservative, neither the historical nor the literary data.

Since 1900 various eminent scholars have produced thoroughgoing studies of the fourth Gospel, the greater part of them denying to the Gospel historical value. Among the more uncompromising may be mentioned Paul W. Schmiedel's article in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* (1901), revised and republished separately in 1908. He concludes that a book which places the

⁴See below, p. 161.

interpretation of the Last Supper a year before it took place, that makes a cohort (*speira*) of 500 or 1000 men fall in fear before the man whom they are sent to arrest (18:3-6), that sets aside one hundred pounds (*litras hekaton*) of spices to embalm Jesus' body (19:39) advertises its complete indifference to fact. Every historical standard is lost in reverence for Jesus.

Not all have taken a position so thoroughly negative as Schmiedel. But most scholars, like the two great English critics, F. Crawford Burkitt and Burnett Hillman Streeter, have agreed that the fourth Gospel cannot be put along beside the Synoptics as a source for the life of Jesus, but is a philosophical interpretation of the meaning of that life. Professor Percy Gardner of Oxford (1915), Professor Benjamin Willard Robinson of Chicago Theological Seminary (1925), Professor Burton Scott Easton of General Theological Seminary (1930), Professor Mary Ely Lyman of Vassar College and Union Theological Seminary (1931), and Dean Ernest Cadman Colwell of the Chicago Divinity School (1936) may be mentioned as among those who share this opinion.

V. SYMBOL AND ALLEGORY

The type of progressive thinking which has gradually conquered the English-speaking world and the process by which it has done so are strikingly illustrated by the articles which have appeared in successive editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Abbott's article of 1879 was far ahead of average English opinion. He denied that John the apostle wrote the Gospel or that it was used by any orthodox Christian before Irenæus. It was the record of an "Ephesian gospel," a doctrine current in that Asian church. It was an esoteric, eclectic interpretation, an intentional modification of the Synoptic tradition, presenting the "spiritual essence of the gospel of Christ as a gospel of love." The verdict which Abbott passed upon the cure of the nobleman's son applies to the whole: If the

fourth Gospel is historically accurate, the others cannot be; if the Synoptics are historically accurate, the fourth Gospel is not independent history, but a new dramatic version of the story.

In the eleventh edition (1911) Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925), the eminent Austro-English Catholic scholar, famous for his works on mysticism, supported the Unitarian Abbott. The same article was reprinted with a few additions in the fourteenth edition (1929). If it be thought unfortunate that, after nearly two decades, the same article should be used, it must nevertheless be said that the position taken was so thoroughly critical that no considerable alteration was called for. Baron von Hügel claimed for the Gospel neither apostolic authorship nor historicity. To attribute the book to an eye-witness increased, instead of resolving, the real difficulties. Claiming the same kind of history in John as in the Synoptics results in not getting it anywhere at all. The book's true greatness lies in its special profoundly spiritual character. "Paul's super-earthly spirit-Christ here breathes and speaks and invites a corresponding spiritual comprehension."⁵

It does not seem necessary to treat Continental scholarship in detail and by name for this period, not at all because of any failure to deal with the subject, but because English and American scholars have, on most critical questions, overtaken those of other lands and share the same opinions. In France one can mention Jean Réville, Alfred Loisy, Charles Guignebert, and Maurice Goguel, all more or less "radical" in their views. In pre-war Germany, Wilhelm Bousset, Johannes Weiss, son of Bernhard, Wilhelm Heitmüller, and Paul Wendland argued that John had suffered early martyrdom. All of them accepted partition or revision theories. Since the War, the famous historian, Eduard Meyer (1855-1931), in his *Origin and Beginnings of Christianity*, has treated the subject

⁵*Op. cit.*, XIII, 98 f.

at length, denying Johannine authorship but affirming the essential literary unity of the work.

VI. BENJAMIN WISNER BACON

Perhaps no one has contributed more to the progress of thought on the Johannine question than the late Benjamin Wisner Bacon (1860-1932). The fascinating account of his mental and scholarly growth which he wrote for Vergilius Ferm's first series of autobiographical sketches, *Contemporary American Theology* (1932), and which appeared just after Professor Bacon's death, centers very largely around his studies of the fourth Gospel. Descendant of Puritan ancestors, son and grandson of Congregational preachers of liberal and vigorous minds, Bacon went through Yale in a day of pussy-footing theologians and came out to meet the bracing breezes aroused by W. Robertson Smith and S. R. Driver.

His true theological inheritance skipped two whole generations of Yale teachers, and went back to the days when the robust scholarship and decided opinions of Moses Stuart and Nathaniel W. Taylor stirred controversy in America. In 1896 he was called back to Yale to a New Testament chair and from that time until his death he stood as one of the leading American exponents of sound scholarship and independent historical criticism, first, briefly, in the Old and then in the New Testament field.

There is a Yale tradition that in his college days, when, as he himself confesses, his chief goals in life were on the "grid-iron," he was called "Freight-train Bacon" because he could slowly carry the ball with a whole team hanging to his shoulders, trying to drag him down. In spite of his self-depreciation, he showed no less individuality and carried no less weight of scholarship—toward his academic goals. Five years of pre-college education in Europe gave him two indispensable tools which too many American and English scholars have lacked,

German and French. He knew what the non-English-speaking world was thinking, and he digested it and worked up his materials in a thoroughly independent mind. If his acute and clever judgment sometimes jumped to unsupported conclusions, if his treatment of the opinions of opponents was sometimes cavalier, not to say scornful, it was in part the result of reaction against the academic indecision and timidity of predecessors and contemporaries who had feared criticism and avoided the expression of their convictions.

His first published book in the New Testament field, the manual *Introduction to the New Testament* of 1900, contained in germ the critical opinions on the Gospel of John which he continued to develop in a long series of periodical articles and in his two greatest books. His *Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* (1910) was the first major contribution of any American-born scholar to the discussion. His *Gospel of the Hellenists*, which was already practically completed when he passed away and which was published under Professor Carl H. Kraeling's editorship in 1933, thus completed the work of a third of a century. Into the details of Bacon's treatment, in many of which he differed from others, it is not necessary to enter. He never found any reason for retracting the sentence with which he began his treatment in the little volume of 1900:

The fourth Gospel is the effort of a gifted mind, schooled in Phrygo-Alexandrian mysticism, and divinely exalted in the conscious apprehension of the mystery of the faith, to ground the higher Christology of Paul in an interpretation, based on partly independent sources, of the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

If Bacon's last volume makes some concessions as to the Aramaic influence visible in the Gospel, he does not follow his colleague, C. C. Torrey, in supposing it to have been written in Aramaic, but ascribes it to some unknown person who presented, possibly in "the 'learned patois' of the Greek-speaking

synagogue of his time," a "gospel of the Hellenists" as it was known chiefly in Asia Minor, but possibly also in Syria. The author wrote to substitute his more philosophical conception for that of the synoptic Gospels, according to "Windisch's paradoxical view." It "is an ancient way of interpreting the religious significance of the life and death of Jesus." One of the delightful triumphs of Bacon's long labours must have been Sanday's confession, shortly before his death, that he had at last given up the defense of the authenticity and historicity of the fourth Gospel and had been won substantially to Bacon's view.⁶

VII. PROBLEMS NEW AND OLD

Where does scholarship now stand with regard to the problems of the fourth Gospel? As to its author, a great variety of solutions have been found. Careful study, unaffected by dogmatism or wish-thinking, and fuller knowledge of Palestine and ancient history have challenged every argument for its historicity and authenticity. The author's knowledge of Jewish customs and Palestinian geography is questionable where it is not entirely incorrect. Mark, who does not claim to have been an eyewitness, writes much more realistically and graphically. Indeed, any good story-teller or novelist can manufacture graphic detail. There may well have been a "beloved disciple" who was not one of the Twelve. But in any case, chapter 21, manifestly an appendix, does not claim him, let alone John the apostle, for the author, but only for a "witness," a reporter. Thus the claim of apostolic authorship vanishes on closer examination.

The tradition that John the apostle died at a great age in Ephesus has been flatly denied, largely on the basis of a Papias tradition found in the *Chronicle* of Georgios Hamartolos

⁶Bacon in Ferm, ed., *Contemp. Amer. Theol.*, I, New York: Round Table Press, 1932, pp. 45 f.; Sanday, *Divine Overruling*, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920, p. 61.

(ninth century) and the de Boor fragment of the *Chronicle* of Philippos Sidetes (fifth century). Both seem to report Papias as saying that John died with his brother James as Jesus had prophesied. There is other corroborating evidence for the statement. Many scholars, therefore, ascribe the Gospel to the Ephesian elder, John, mentioned by Papias, and believe him to have been a young Jerusalemite who was a beloved disciple of Jesus, too young to have competed in any sense or even to have been mentioned with the Twelve in the Synoptic account. Others would make no attempt to discover the name or identity of the author.

A considerable number who abandon the historicity and full authenticity of the Gospel believe that it preserves genuine historical reminiscences from an eyewitness, but that the final editor or actual author was not an eyewitness nor a Palestinian Jew, and that he is to be blamed for the dislocations, inconsistencies, and contradictions which honest criticism discovers in the book. The problem of authorship becomes merely interesting or academic, so far as Jesus is concerned, when the historicity of the Gospel is no longer maintained.

The chronological and geographical notices of the Gospel have drawn forth a flood of discussions. Unfortunately they cannot be checked against any other data at present available in sufficient quantity. The journeys to the various Jewish feasts may have been intended to provide an opportunity for the discourses which are connected with them. The setting of the crucifixion at the time of the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb may be a way of making it clear that Jesus was the Lamb that was slain. Ænon near Salem may be the "springs" which are the source of "peace." Beth-abara may be the "place of the passing over" to a new life. Or, again, all of these undiscoverable Johannine sites, unknown to the Synoptists and in some cases to any early tradition, may be centers where early Christians

or possibly members of the Johannine sect were settled at the end of the first century. The suggestion made by Bacon and others that they were the sites visited by Christian pilgrims in the early second century has much to commend it.⁷

The problem of the historicity of the fourth Gospel has been luridly illumined by Binet-Sanglé and others who have questioned the sanity of Jesus. A very large proportion of the arguments used to prove that Jesus was a paranoiac or otherwise mentally unstable have been drawn from the fourth Gospel. Is it possible that the Jesus of the Synoptics, who almost never refers to himself except indirectly, who insists on faith in God and moral living as the prerequisites for entrance into the kingdom of God, can also have set down, apparently as the one basic condition of admission, the demand that men should believe in him as the Son of God? Could he have claimed to be one with God, not in the sense of self-surrender or devotion, but by nature? Even if he did demand that his followers "confess him before men," can the Jesus of the Synoptics have said, "Before Abraham was I am"?

The answer given by the great majority of critics during the last thirty-five years is that the discourses at least are not historical. They would not even go so far as Strachan, who believes that the ideas, though not the words, are Christ's. Many would agree that the idea behind the saying, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," may have been in Jesus' mind. But it is a very different thing to make Jesus say, "I and the Father are one." His followers could say that of him, but as many students think, it becomes a very different claim, a claim such as only a paranoiac can make, when put into the mouth of Jesus. As a pictorial representation of the mystical faith of a later age, the Gospel is intelligible; much more than that, it becomes a magnificent drama of the conflict between

⁷Bacon, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 388 f.; *Gospel of the Hellenists*, pp. 397-409; Karl Kundsinn, *Topologische Ueberlieferungstoffe im Johannesevangelium*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1925.

light and darkness, faith and unbelief. But as history it is impossible.

Two new problems with regard to the fourth Gospel have recently been much discussed: its possible relation to the Johannean sect, which is supposed to have become the later Mandæans, and the possibility that it was originally written in Aramaic, not in Greek. The material that has become common property in the scholarly world through Lidzbarski's translation of the Mandæan writings made such a profound impression upon Walter Bauer that his second edition of his commentary on John in Lietzmann's *Handbuch* was almost entirely rewritten to show the correspondences between the fourth Gospel and Mandæan literature. So far as Bauer's parallels are well taken, and many, though surely not all, are, they go to confirm the mystical, non-Jewish character of the thought in the Gospel and thus deprive it so much the more of value as a historical source of the life of Jesus. Hans Lietzmann and Alfred Loisy, on the other hand, deny the origin of Mandæism in the Johannean sect and, therefore, the cogency and interpretative value of the parallels. The whole question must be held in abeyance until the Mandæan and Manichæan documents are more critically studied and the history of these peculiar religious movements better known. At present the tides seem to be setting in heavily against the Mandæan theory.

The Aramaic origin of the Gospel, if it could be proved, would go far to set it up as an authority over the Synoptics. It would mean that it had been written in Syria or Palestine.⁸ It would mean that its esoteric mysticism was current among the Aramaic-speaking populations of that region even as it was among Hellenists in Alexandria and Ephesus, and the background of the Gospel would no longer be Hellenistic, but Oriental, as the Mandæan parallels may be held to suggest.

⁸See above, pp. 135 ff.; below, pp. 173 ff.

This may all be true, but it is as yet very far from being demonstrated. It must be admitted that mysticism of the type called Hellenistic was not confined to Asia Minor and Egypt, as scholars often seem to think. But it is yet to be proved that anything of the kind was common in Palestine in Jesus' day, or that it had made any progress in Palestinian Judaism. Excavation in Galilee, with the discovery of inscriptions or reliefs, or the uncovering of early papyri in arid regions of Syria and Palestine might go far to prove it, but no evidence, either archæological or literary, is yet available, and its entire absence is significant.

As to the original language of the Gospel, the debate, like that regarding the original language of the Synoptics, is at a stalemate. Twenty-five years ago the studies of scholars like Professor Adolf Deissmann in the papyri seemed to have demonstrated beyond the possibility of contradiction that the Greek of the fourth Gospel was the simple but grammatical colloquial speech of a man with no literary training or aspirations. Now certain Semitic scholars insist that it is full of Aramaic idioms and mistranslations and that the Greek scholars do not know enough Aramaic to appreciate the force of the arguments for an Aramaic original. The Græcists insist that the Semitists do not know the material that has come to light within the past half-century in the Egyptian papyri. That material, so they argue, proves that the Gospel of John is good Koinê, or "common" Greek, and needs no reference to mistranslation from Aramaic to explain its meanings. In general it must be admitted that the works of Professors C. F. Burney of Oxford, C. C. Torrey and Millar Burrows of Yale, and J. A. Montgomery of Pennsylvania have made no impression on the "Greeks," who hold the book of Dean E. C. Colwell of the University of Chicago on the *Greek of the Fourth Gospel* (1931) to be a sufficient answer.

The writer holds with the last, believing that, until much

more conclusive evidence comes to light, one is justified in accepting the tradition of the Church which points to Ephesus as the place where the Gospel was composed and in believing that the original was Greek. The latter goes with the former. As to the contrary argument, our knowledge of first-century Aramaic, unfortunately, is exceedingly fragmentary, while we know first-century *Koiné* Greek from a multitude of literary and non-literary documents. Even if masses of contemporary Aramaic documents were available, the fact would still remain that arguments from mistranslations, the main foundation of the Aramaic hypothesis, depend entirely upon subjective factors. They are always in the nature of conjectural emendations, a most precarious footing for a far-reaching theory. The student discovers in his document what he regards as a difficulty or inconsistency. He hunts through what little Aramaic is known in all lands from the time of Ezra, say 450 B.C., to the time of the Talmud, say 550 A.D., to find a phrase which could have been misunderstood and mistranslated to give the Greek phrase to which he objects but which, properly translated, gives the meaning which he thinks should be put into the biblical text. And thus he proves his thesis that the original language was Aramaic and also puts his own idea into the text. But, as scholars from Deissmann to Colwell have proved, Greek parallels explain the phenomena. Why then adopt a new and highly speculative theory, when a much simpler and more satisfactory one is already at hand?

If conclusive evidence for an Aramaic original could be produced, then the consequences must be accepted. It would then inevitably be argued that the fourth Gospel must come nearer to the original words of Jesus and preserve a more accurate account of his life because it is in the language which Jesus and his disciples actually spoke. But the difficulties in the way of discovering the real Jesus of Nazareth are not thereby removed. Rather, the historical problem becomes in-

finitely worse and the historical value of all of the Gospels is practically shattered.

The theory of Syrian origin does not necessarily involve the theory that the Gospel was written in Aramaic. The church at Antioch was probably always predominantly Hellenistic. Among well-known scholars, Jülicher, Baldensperger, Burney, Schlatter, and Goguel have thought of Syria, that is Antioch, as the place where the Gospel was written, largely because of the familiarity of Ignatius, the Antiochene bishop and Roman martyr, with its type of thought. Doctor Hugo Odeberg of Upsala, a student of Canon Box at the University of London, has brought the fourth Gospel into the Palestinian atmosphere by beginning the assemblage of Jewish parallels.⁹ Gerhard Kittel argues for Jewish relationships, and Paul Fiebig has published articles looking in the same direction. Rudolf Bultmann connects the Odes of Solomon, the Gospel of John, and the Mandæans all with Syria. Walter Bauer (1934) holds that the first letter and the Gospel of John probably arose in Syria in the time of Ignatius, but were unknown to him and that the Gospel was, to the "orthodox" in the Church, long only one of the numerous heretical Gospels, of which every sect had one to use as propaganda.¹⁰

What then was the purpose of the writer of the fourth Gospel? The question has every possible answer. Thirty years ago Ernest Findlay Scott, now a professor emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in New York, then a young minister in the United Free Church of Scotland, published one of the finest pieces of interpretation to be found in the English language, *The Fourth Gospel, Its Purpose and Theology*. He took his footing squarely upon the German criticism which denied the historicity of the Gospel and upon the ex-

⁹*The Fourth Gospel Interpreted in its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World*. Upsala and Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1929.

¹⁰*Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, pp. 96, 207-15.

pressed purpose of the Gospel itself, to prove "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." It had appeared at a critical period in the history of Christianity, the first or second decade of the second century, and set out to present the Gospel in a form adapted to a new age and a different culture. Combining the Synoptic tradition, the Pauline mysticism and Alexandrian philosophy, it was a blend of various tendencies and attitudes and a "complex work of art." In order to accomplish his chief aim, that his hearers "might have life 'through'" Christ, and in order to unify and strengthen the Church, the writer undertook various subordinate tasks, the repelling of criticism and attacks, and the reinterpretation of various Christian doctrines. The John-the-Baptist sect, docetists, and Gnostics on the one hand, narrow Judaistic and especially apocalyptic and millenarian views on the other—these were some of the problems with which he dealt. Scott emphasized the symbolic and allegorical intention of the writer. After thirty years there is little that needs correction in his discussion. If anything should be added, it is only that criticism has gone farther in the same direction. One must reckon more seriously than most scholars have done with the heavy Gnostic precipitate and the strong allegorical colouring of the book.

This brief and inadequate survey of the course of interpretation as applied to the "spiritual Gospel" has demonstrated, I hope, the immense gains that have been made since the days of Strauss and Baur. That Gospel is certainly far better understood than it was a century ago. The light it throws on the history of the early church is clear and distinct. Yet, when all possible credit is given to the scholarship of one hundred years, the achievement of Baur and his disciples only stands out in higher relief. In many points, perhaps in most, the work of the Tübingen school is found to have been mistaken. Its interpretation of the fourth Gospel was far from adequate, but in one thing it was entirely correct: the fourth Gospel has noth-

ing to add to the picture of the historical Jesus. It must be judged by the Synoptic Gospels. Anything new or different which it offers is suspect. I cannot believe that Goguel is right in seeking historical information in a supposedly authentic stratum of the Gospel's sources, nor that Bacon and others are justified in adopting the Johannine date, the fourteenth Nisan, for the crucifixion. In a work which is so clearly polemical and which, as Windisch has shown, is also anti-Synoptic,¹¹ no dependence can be put upon any supposedly historical statement.

The progress of criticism during the last century and a half proves that Herder was guided by true insight when he wrote one life of Jesus according to the Synoptics and another according to John. As Hans Windisch showed, the fourth Gospel was written to supplant the other three. The choice must be made between the two traditions, and there can be no question as to which will be accepted by the student trained in historical method. Clement was right. The fourth is a "spiritual Gospel," that is an allegorical, mystical, gnostic reinterpretation of Christianity. That was what Clement meant, not that the Gospel was historically valuable. As an evaluation of the meaning of Jesus to faith, as a presentation of the mystical element in religion, the fourth Gospel will ever remain one of the great religious documents of the world. It helped mightily in saving Christianity for the future by offering a type of religion which is indispensable to a small minority of people. But for those who wish to know how Jesus lived and what he taught it has no value. Mysticism is one thing, history is another.

¹¹*Johannes und die Synoptiker: Wollte der vierte Evangelist die älteren Evangelien ergänzen oder ersetzen*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926; see above, p. 161.

CHAPTER X

THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM THE RELATIONS AND SOURCES OF THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS

I. OUTGROWN SOLUTIONS

HAVING ruled out all other sources, one turns to the synoptic Gospels to find materials for a biography of Jesus. And what is found? This is the crucial problem. Are the first three Gospels biographies? Do they even furnish materials for a biography? What reliable data can be discovered when they are subjected to the tests of historical criticism? As students have approached this problem, they have found it necessary to analyze it into various subsidiary problems. In the first place, what are the relations of the three Gospels one to another? Are they separate and independent accounts, each based upon the personal knowledge of the author? Only Luke (1:1-4) gives any indication as to sources, and he emphatically disclaims first-hand knowledge. What were their sources of information? The traditions of the ancient church, such as that of Papias, regarding the origins and relationships of the three little books are indefinite and ambiguous. They are, therefore, uncertain of interpretation and dubious as to value. What attitude can modern historical science take toward the synoptic Gospels as historical documents? The extraordinary combination of dif-

ferences and resemblances among them raises at once a formidable literary problem.

The oldest theory of the relations of the Gospels is that they were the independent work of individuals who themselves knew the facts or received their information, as Luke claims to do, from those who had been "eye-witnesses of the message." This was the theory upon which the harmonists worked. Through successive centuries conservative scholars repeated—often unconscious of quoting—the saying of Chrysostom that the agreements of the Gospels testified to their truthfulness, their apparent disagreement in small matters to the absence of collusion among them. One would hazard the guess that the same theory is still taught in more than half the Sunday Schools of the world. Yet the presence of these very striking agreements and equally striking disagreements, thus so lightly explained away, constitutes the very kernel of the "Synoptic problem."

Two independent witnesses may quote the sayings of the characters of their story with no little accuracy. But no two, let alone three, will agree as to connecting links and descriptions of actions as the Gospels often do. Since the discrepancies forbid the supposition that the three writers were verbally inspired to tell the story, there are two varieties of hypothesis possible: either all three used common sources or some of the three used the others. Possibly, there were both common sources and mutual use. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the Synoptic problem, in fact though not in name, has constantly plagued students of the life of Jesus, and, apparently, every possible combination has been tried in order to open the door upon the secret of the origins of these small documents.

One of the most common theories, reached by a very easy step from the theory of mutual independence, was that all were derived from a common basis of oral apostolic teaching.

Storr (1794) and Eckermann (1796, 1806) are credited with having suggested the idea, and Herder (1796-7) adopted it. Johann Karl Ludwig Gieseler (1792-1854) made it so thoroughly his own, however, that it is usually named after him. Alford, Westcott, Godet, David Smith, and other conservatives have adopted it. According to Gieseler, the earliest apostles avoided the pen, but the needs of the early evangelists forced them to prepare and teach a stereotyped account of the life and teachings of Jesus. Various tendencies and interests in the early church explain the differences between the various Gospels, which were independently drawn from the common fount.

The chief advantage of the theory of an original oral Gospel would appear to be that it makes full allowance for the differences between the Gospels. Yet David Smith found it necessary to accuse the Synoptists of seven different kinds of errors and to pin his faith to the "personal knowledge" of John. In any case the theory fails to take account of the very close resemblances between the Synoptics and other evidence that they depend upon prior written documents. Its real strength lies in the fact that it probably draws a fairly accurate picture of the conditions in the primitive Christian community. The new form-history school—of which more later—exploits this period to the utmost, and with much reason, but less wisdom. However, the theory of an oral Gospel does not at all explain the relations between the canonical Gospels, and it has never been generally accepted.

Gieseler's theory had been proposed as substitute for various theories of written sources. Lessing had suggested that the so-called apocryphal Gospels of the Hebrews, the Apostles, the Nazarenes, and Matthew were all one, and that this one was the original Gospel upon which the others depended, a written Protevangel. Others supposed the Hebrew Logia of Matthew mentioned by Papias, which they held to be a different work from the Gospel of the Hebrews, to be the Pro-

tevangeli. The chief rival whom Gieseler sought to displace was Eichhorn with his "Protevangeli" theory, which assumed an original written Gospel, not to be identified with any known Gospel. Eichhorn adopted various suggested changes in his *Introduction to the New Testament* (1804), assuming various Greek as well as Aramaic recensions, until his theory became too heavy to bear its own weight. Edwin A. Abbott returned to a search for this primitive Gospel in his *Fourfold Gospel* (1913-16).

In America there has recently been a return to what closely resembles Eichhorn's theory. The sharpest controversy that has arisen in this country since heresy trials became unpopular concerns the original language of the Gospels. Current interest in the question justifies a brief discussion, although the verdict of New Testament scholars is that the proposed solution leads nowhere. In a series of articles culminating in his two volumes, *The Four Gospels, a New Translation* (1933), and *Our Translated Gospels: Some of the Evidence* (1936), Charles Cutler Torrey, professor of Semitic languages in Yale University, has advanced the theory that all four Gospels were translated directly from Aramaic originals into Greek.¹ He regards the Greek of all of them as being substantially of the same character and like that of the Septuagint. It is ridiculous, he says, to compare it with the Greek of the vulgar papyri, as the majority of New Testament scholars for a generation have been accustomed to do. The material, like the language, is homogeneous.

The Gospels are literary documents written in Aramaic in Palestine during the first decades after Jesus' death, Mark about 40 A. D. Matthew used the Aramaic Mark. Luke had the sources of both his predecessors and other Semitic documents besides. Mark had been translated immediately into Greek, and the translator of Matthew had both the Aramaic

¹See above, pp. 135 ff., 165 ff.

and the Greek Mark before him, while the translator of Luke had the Greek of both Mark and Matthew. The evidence for the Aramaic originals is discovered in alleged mistranslations of Aramaic phrases and sentences here and there. The complicated theory of the use of both Greek translations and Aramaic originals by the successive translators is required by the striking similarities between the Greek Gospels as we have them.

The arguments against this theory are, in the first place, the same as those against the hypothesis that the fourth Gospel was originally written in Aramaic, with the difference that all New Testament scholars recognize the evidence for "translation Greek" in the Synoptics, but not in John, and that there are additional opposing arguments in this case. The picture of early Christianity and its "literary" activities which Professor Torrey finds it necessary to draw in order to support his hypothesis is contradicted by the available evidence. His theory of Synoptic origins is exceedingly complicated and unconvincing. Those best versed in the Greek language and best acquainted with the various types of Hellenistic Greek, the literary *Koiné*, the "vulgar papyri," the various translators of the Septuagint, and the different books of the New Testament, find his judgments as to linguistic phenomena and literary style more than "ridiculous," to use the adjective he applies to those whom he criticizes. Arguments from mistranslation always depend upon a most undependable procedure, conjectural emanation.

In regard to the Synoptic Gospels Professor Torrey's arguments for Aramaic originals prove only what has long been a commonplace of New Testament scholarship, that their sources were oral and written traditions in Aramaic and translated from Aramaic. The value of seeking to recover the original Aramaic of Jesus' words is indisputable. It is most unfortunate that the great service which a Semitist of Professor Torrey's eminence is able to render in this direction has been

obscured by a useless and impossible theory of Gospel origins. It is to be hoped that the dispute may be forgotten and that the contribution which Professor Torrey's discussion of the Aramaic has made may be utilized to the full.

A very different hypothesis of Gospel origins was presented by the versatile Schleiermacher in 1817 in his *Critical Essay on the Gospel of Luke*, as it was entitled in Connop Thirlwall's anonymous translation of 1825. The "Essay" was intended to be the first of two volumes, but the second, on Acts, never appeared. Following earlier suggestions, Schleiermacher insisted that the reasons why the Gospels sometimes agree and sometimes contradict one another could not be fully explained if any one depended on the others. But the theory of a single apostolic Gospel failed both to explain the differences and to suit the probable conditions in the early church. He later argued that Eichhorn's theory of an original written Gospel also did not explain the differences between our Gospels, while Gieseler's theory of an original oral apostolic Gospel, which had appeared the year after the essay on Luke, did not fit the known history of the early church. The manifest incompleteness of our Gospels did not suit the assumption of an apostolic origin. Moreover, Eichhorn's theory was too modern, Gieseler's smacked too much of the idea of a school of rhapsodists.

Schleiermacher's own anecdote hypothesis was motivated—unconsciously, no doubt—by his preference for John. He pictured the apostles and other witnesses of Jesus' life as telling various stories about him. These narratives, or *diegeseis*—he appropriated the word which Luke used of his predecessors—he thought of as brief stories (anecdotes, I think, represents his meaning), which were fitted together in various ways by various persons and eventually collected and written down. The use of similar collections by the evangelists explains the resemblances between our first three Gospels, the use of dissimilar collections, the differences. No one of the Synoptics,

then, possessed apostolic authority, whereas John did. That was for Schleiermacher the important conclusion. The form-history method has practically returned to Schleiermacher's theory and takes account of the stage when such anecdotes were arising. No one would now regard the anecdote hypothesis as applying to anything more than a passing but important stage in the evolution of the gospel into the Gospels, but for that stage it has value.

The theories of Gospel origins which attracted the most attention during the years between Strauss's two lives of Jesus (1835-1864) were those of his teacher, F. C. Baur, and Baur's disciples. Something—perhaps it was the influence of Hegel's speculative mind, perhaps it was merely the necessity imposed by an impossible historical theory—led them to erect beautiful hypotheses upon the airy foundations of pure assumptions. The less they knew about a period or a document, the more certain they seemed to be that it fitted into their scheme. The lost Gospel of the Hebrews was the original of Matthew; the lost Gospel of Marcion, of Luke; and in both cases they could accurately describe the long-lost original document, the one Jewish-Christian, the other gentile-Christian. Mark fitted into the scheme as a synthesis, or neutralization, of the two lost originals. Tübingen theories were repeatedly modified and continued long to be discussed, but the chief interest moved into other channels. The Tübingen studies were largely speculative and they lacked close critical attention to the literary phenomena. Baur repudiated as abstract the literary criticism which took into account the actual wording of the documents, while his philosophical hypothesis was historical, so he claimed. He was right in objecting to purely literary criticism divorced from history. He was wrong in his conception of history.

None of the theories as to the pre-Gospel period solved the insistent problems of the relations of the three Gospels one to another. Aside from the theory of complete independence,

which did not even touch the problem of resemblances, the one most widely held has been that of Augustine, that the Gospels were written in the order in which they are found in the canon, and that each writer made use of those which preceded him, though each had his own inspiration and independence. Mark, according to Augustine, was the *pedisequus* and *breviator* of Matthew. In view of Papias' statement that Mark in some way carried the authority of Peter's name, it seems strange that his Gospel should have been given a status inferior to that of Matthew, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. But Papias was little known, and, in any case, Augustine's authority was greater than that of Papias. Moreover, Mark, read after Matthew in the canonical order, seems to copy him, and, for homiletical and hortatory purposes, Matthew's brevity and conciseness, coupled with its fullness in teachings, give it a decided advantage.

Augustine's was the orthodox theory until 1863. De Wette adopted it in 1826 and repeated it through five editions of his influential "Introduction." Paulus and Gfrörer held it. H. A. W. Meyer put it into the first edition of his famous commentary (1832). Above all, Schwegler and Baur made it the foundation of the Tübingen hypothesis of primitive Christian history. Mark was the synthesis of the antithetic Petrinism of Matthew and Paulinism of Luke. Thus "historical" criticism united with "abstract," or literary, criticism, conservative with radical, to settle the question once and for all. It seemed impossible that any one could ever place Mark first. But an entirely different theory of mutual use has now come to be almost a dogma.

II. PRIORITY OF MARK

During the whole of the modern period the little second Gospel, almost lost among its larger rivals, had not been without advocates. Besides men of lesser note, that acute Catholic

critic, Richard Simon (1638-1712), and the ingenious Herder (in 1796-7) had noted Mark's independence. But it was not until about a century ago that its true character began to be realized. In 1832 Schleiermacher published in *Theological Studies and Criticisms* an article on the Papias testimony which, without requiring a decided change in his own views, suggested the true path toward a solution of the Synoptic problem. His thesis was that the Logia of Matthew and the Mark to which Papias refers were not at all to be identified with the later Gospels, but that each was a collection, the one of teachings, made by Matthew, the other of single details (*Züge*), spoken or acted, from the life of Jesus, set down just as Peter had related them. In conclusion he stated succinctly the problem which necessarily arises. By a hair's breadth he missed the proper formulation of the Synoptic problem. Moreover, his conclusions were based on speculations regarding Papias' enigmatic utterances, not on a study of the Gospels themselves. A firmer foundation was required.

The first to discover the Ariadne thread to lead out of the maze, as Wellhausen phrased it, was Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), the classical scholar who is credited with having had a greater influence on the general course of philological study and the development of the principles of criticism than any other single man in the nineteenth century. The New Testament student knows him for his critical editions of the text. In an article, "De ordine narrationum in evangeliiis synopticis," published in *Theological Studies and Criticisms* in 1835, with the keenness of insight which enabled him to make original contributions in many fields, he hit upon the essential feature which proves Mark's priority. Matthew and Luke depend upon Mark for the order in which they narrate the incidents of the life of Jesus. Therefore Mark is the earliest of the three.

Why Lachmann's clear and succinct argument made little impression does not appear. Wellhausen was probably right

in finding two reasons: first, the extreme conciseness and brevity of the argument, and second, the noise raised by Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and the attention attracted by Baur and his school. Contrary to Schweitzer, Wellhausen believed that both of the two men who came next in line knew Lachmann's article, but the one, Wilke, had already reached the same conclusion independently before 1835 and the other, Weisse, worked out his own demonstration.

It is generally agreed, in any case, that the works which really made decisive progress were published in 1838. Christian Hermann Weisse (1801-66), noted chiefly in the field of the philosophy of religion, was *ausserordentlicher* professor of philosophy in Leipzig, but a feud with the Herbartians prevented his receiving a full professorship. Therefore, in 1837, he retired from the university and gave himself to theological studies. The notoriety of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* attracted him to the field of Gospel criticism. The result was *The Gospel History Critically and Philosophically Treated*. In some points Weisse echoes Herder, who had said that the comparison between the Gospels should begin with "events and matter" (*Begebenheiten und der Sache*), rather than words and phrases. Weisse carried the discussion an important step farther when he said, echoing Lachmann, that the decisive evidence for Mark's priority was to be found in the "composition and arrangement of the whole." This must still be regarded as the fundamental argument.

Weisse made four points which, though the first and fourth can be questioned, are worth repeating: (1) A trace of a common norm is to be found only where the other two agree with Mark. (2) Where the three agree, the agreement is to be traced through Mark. (3) Where they do not agree with Mark, there is no evidence of a common order. (4) Their differences are greater in the similar parts which do not come from Mark.

The other important work of 1838, *The First Evangelist*, by Christian Gottlob Wilke, undertook the detailed investigation of the similarities and differences between the three Gospels and, as Schweitzer says, provided the "mathematical calculation for the astronomical hypothesis." Wellhausen finds his argument both exhaustive and exhausting. Wilke (1786-1854), a Saxon pastor, became a Roman Catholic in 1846. He occupied himself with New Testament studies, lexical and exegetical, but did not again return to the field of Gospel criticism.

The theory of Marcan priority, so ably presented by Lachmann, Weisse, and Wilke, did not at once sweep the field. The Tübingen school was just approaching the height of its influence. The works of Schwegler, Baur, and Ritschl drew attention to the problem of Marcion and to the noncanonical Gospels and loudly maintained the secondary character of Mark. Bruno Bauer, to be sure, undertook in 1841 to defend the priority of Mark by showing how the divergencies of the other two could be explained by their peculiar "tendencies," or special interests. He went on, moreover, to trace the theological tendencies which operated in the pre-Gospel period to produce Mark itself. Thus he used the Tübingen theory, but with better results.

It was more than a decade before the arguments of Schleiermacher, Lachmann, Wilke, and Weisse began to bear fruit. After 1850 opinion shifted rapidly. Meantime, other scholars adopted the Marcan theory, Eduard Reuss in 1842, Heinrich Ewald in 1850, not to mention several more. Wellhausen remarks that Ewald had the success that belongs to Lachmann, Wilke, and Weisse. Although, like a faithful Tübinger, Keim in his *History of Jesus of Nazara* (1867-72) still treated Matthew as the earliest Gospel, the question can be regarded as having been settled by Albert Réville (1829-1906) in 1862, and Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910) in 1863. When, in

that year, Holtzmann wrote *The Synoptic Gospels, their Origin and Historical Character*, he could say that the long discussion had reached certain settled conclusions:

1. There had been a period during which the whole content of the Gospel had been orally transmitted and some of the material in our Synoptics had been drawn directly from oral tradition.

2. It was equally true that the Gospels as a whole were not drawn directly from oral sources but their materials had passed through a previous written stage.

3. The three Synoptic Gospels were not independent accounts.

4. The one positive result was that there was an original documentary source (*Grundschrift*).

Without assumptions as to where this *Grundschrift*, which he called A, was to be found, Holtzmann then analyzed the three Gospels to discover what material was common to all. The result was the discovery that Mark contains only thirty verses which are not in one or both of the other two. There is nothing in Mark to demand any other source than A. The discovery which textual criticism had made, that the last twelve verses of Mark (16:9-20) were not originally a part of the Gospel removed one difficult problem. The only conclusion which Holtzmann found possible was that Mark was almost identical with the original source. There remained, however, a very considerable mass of material common to Matthew and Luke, but wanting in Mark. Therefore there must have been a second source.

III. THE TWO-DOCUMENT THEORY

That there had been another main source was by no means a new theory. As Holtzmann's argument clearly shows, it was the almost inevitable concomitant of the theory of Marcan

priority. It had been implicit in Schleiermacher's conclusion regarding the relation of the Logia which Papias mentions to the Gospel of Matthew. Schleiermacher selected the five sections of Matthew which close with the formula, "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words," as typical of what the Logia must have been and then sought elsewhere in Matthew for similar materials, and thus he secured an impressive collection. Luke, however, could not have used it, for he presents the materials in a very different way and has much that is missing in Matthew. Here again Schleiermacher's keenness deserted him just on the verge of the discovery of the key to the riddle. Lachmann regarded Matthew as a combination of the Logia with narratives found in Mark. Karl August Credner (1797-1857) of Giessen, in his *Introduction to the New Testament* (1836), presented a theory that the canonical Matthew was constructed out of the Matthean Logia and the Marcan reminiscences mentioned by Papias, while Luke had the Logia, Matthew, Mark, and other narratives to use. He thus came nearest to the two-document theory which later prevailed. Wilke thought that Matthew got his discourses out of Luke. Where Luke found them he did not ask. Weisse, on the other hand, having recognized Mark as the basis of the order and the narrative portions of Matthew and Luke, went on to the conclusion that the Logia were the sources of the discourses in both. Here the "two-document hypothesis" first came clearly and explicitly to light with a satisfactory demonstration. Like the hypothesis of Marcan priority, it progressed slowly because of the opposition of the Tübingen school, and only with the championship of Ewald and the Meyer commentaries did it come to general acceptance.

As Holtzmann in 1863 spoke the final word for the Marcan hypothesis, so Carl Weizsäcker in 1864 gave the final and decisive argument for the second or "discourse source." Weizsäcker (1822-99) was another product of the Swabian system

of theological education. His five years in the Tübingen *Stift* (1840-45) left him a follower of neither Beck nor Baur. Various preaching and teaching positions and then a decade at Karlsruhe as court chaplain with a variety of duties gave him a broad preparation for the position of professor of church history at Tübingen in succession to Baur. His first outstanding work, *Investigations Concerning the Gospel Histories, Their Sources, and the Course of Their Development* (1864) was epoch-making in its method, its thoroughness, and its conclusions. Weizsäcker had been sent to Tübingen to counteract the negative influence of Baur's work. He did it, not by turning to pietism, dogmatism, or obscurantism, but by a thoroughly scientific and realistic approach to the sources. His investigation of the "basic document" of the Synoptics, which he virtually identifies with our Mark and the Mark of Papias, discovered all of its essential features and peculiarities. His study of the "collection of discourses" was equally thorough and discriminating. He then proceeded to evaluate the fourth Gospel as written from first to last under the domination of a dogmatic idea. Finally, upon the basis of this investigation, he described the course of the historical development of the ministry of Jesus. As a scientific accomplishment, Weizsäcker's work was far in advance of his times, but still far from final. He himself did not stand still but went on to more critical positions in his work on the apostolic age.

Holtzmann and Weizsäcker may be regarded as marking the end of one period and the beginning of a new one. In spite of Keim's retrogression, the two-document hypothesis made extremely rapid progress. Bernard Weiss, in a discussion of the "Discourse Sections" which was published in the 1864 *Annual of German Theology*, Weizsäcker's own magazine, announced his agreement on the most important points, and in the second number of the same journal for 1865 warmly greeted Weizsäcker's work on the "Gospel Histories." In his own

commentaries he reinforced the arguments and refined the analysis. Meyer, whose frequently revised and widely read commentaries exercised great influence, abandoned Griesbach's theory that Mark was an abridgement and compilation of Matthew and Luke for its opposite, the two-document theory. An anonymous reviewer in Hauck's *Theological Annual* for 1867 remarked that no other Gospel had undergone such a complete change of opinion in so short a time. Ten or twenty years before, Griesbach's view had seemed to be unassailable. Now the view that Mark was the basis of the other two was more or less accepted.

As to Mark, three quarters of a century have seen no change of opinion on this point. Only recently Robert Henry Lightfoot, radical grandnephew of the great conservative bishop, wrote, "Nothing, happily, has occurred . . . to upset the great nineteenth-century discovery of the priority of St. Mark's gospel."² As to details there have been many differences of opinion. For example, was the source used by Matthew and Luke the same as our Mark or was it larger or possibly smaller? This problem of Proto-Mark (*Ur-Marcus*) has taken barrels of ink. So has also the question whether Mark knew the discourse document.

Probably even more ink has been spilled over the character and extent of this second source. It has commonly been called Q, supposedly from the initial of the German word for source, *Quelle*. Professor Lightfoot, however, gives a new explanation on the authority of Doctor James Armitage Robinson. Robinson said that in the eighteen-nineties, in lecturing to Cambridge students on the Synoptic problem, he had been accustomed to refer to Mark as P, *i.e.*, the reminiscences of Peter, while for the teaching source he had taken the next letter of the alphabet, Q. He thought that some of his hearers had taken the usage across the North Sea to Germany and that

²*History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, London, 1936, p. 16.

the derivation from *Quelle* had been an afterthought, an ætiological myth, so to speak.³

The problems involved in this "second source" theory are numerous. Was there ever a single document? Did it take form in Aramaic or Greek? Did it include all, or nearly all, not only of the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke not found in Mark, but also other discourse material? Or was it relatively small? Which represents its character better, Luke or Matthew? Or did they use different collections of oral traditions? Had Mark used it? What other sources did Luke and Matthew have? Did either of them use the other? What is the relation of the two primary sources to the testimonies of Papias? Was he talking of our Mark and Matthew, or of our Mark and the second source, which, being incorporated into our Matthew, had given it its distinctive character and its name? Nearly every possible theory and combination of theories have been excogitated by some one, all without clearing up many of the difficulties which a minute comparison of the documents discovers. Thus the majority of scholars have regarded the Matthean Logia of Papias as equivalent, or practically equivalent, to the discourse document. To this B. W. Bacon vehemently objected, insisting that Papias had in mind the canonical Gospels in both the sayings which Eusebius quoted. This, like most of the problems just enumerated, probably can never be satisfactorily solved.

The primary question is that of the value of these two documents, Mark and the collection of discourses, as historical sources. Are they historically trustworthy? Which is the older and which deserves the greater confidence? It seems to be generally accepted that the discourse document is the older, but Wellhausen, Wendland, and Eduard Meyer have insisted that Mark is older in both his narrative and his discourse material. As to their historical value, opinion has changed materially in

³*Ibid.*, p. 27, note.

the last quarter of a century. At one time it became customary to regard anything which was found in Mark and still more anything from the discourse document as pure gold. But more recently reflection has raised a large question mark here. Without denying the historicity of the accounts in general, the critic now sees that many details in both Mark and Q cannot be regarded as original statements of eyewitnesses, nor necessarily absolute fact even if they were. The oral stage of transmission abounds in historical pitfalls.

The total outcome of the two-document hypothesis was to replace three witnesses to the life of Jesus by two. Seemingly Matthew and Luke have little to add to Mark or to the discourse document except editorial framework or improvements which are often misimprovements. That very keen Cambridge New Testament scholar, F. Crawford Burkitt, sought to rescue something by making much of what he called "doubly attested sayings," those found twice in Matthew or Luke, once taken from Mark, and once from Q. The idea seems hardly to have received the attention it deserves. To be sure, such double attestation may be partly fortuitous, though not more so than much of our tradition about Jesus. It at least indicates what in Jesus' teachings made the strongest impression upon his hearers. Aside from these doubly attested sayings and a very small number of doubly attested incidents, such as the miraculous feast in the wilderness, there is usually but one witness to any saying or act of Jesus. Merely because "Not one jot or tittle of the Law shall pass away," or "Come unto me, all ye laborers and burden-bearers" are found only in Matthew is no reason for questioning their authenticity. Likewise the fact that the parable of the Good Samaritan is found only in Luke does not render it suspect. They are as well attested as the stories or sayings Matthew and Luke took from Mark or Q. The only difference is that we do not know their primary source. In other words, there is no "triple tradition" or

"double tradition," unless the material can be traced to some two or three documents which a well-considered theory discovers back of the three Gospels which have been handed down. What the discovery of some fairly complete noncanonical Gospel might involve no one can say. What is known of the Gospel of the Hebrews, for example, and the recently published fragments of an uncanonical Gospel do not presage any great change of opinion in this matter.

The "two-document hypothesis," to be sure, actually must allow for more than two sources, though not for more than two witnesses to any particular event, except in one or two cases. Besides Mark and Q, there is a very considerable mass of material for which some other source must be found, the infancy sections in Matthew and Luke, for example, not to mention much more. There are striking differences between the handling of parallel material by Matthew and Luke. Luke has an account of the Passion which is not at all like that of Mark in numerous details. Matthew alters Mark in some ways, Luke does so in others. The discourse material appears in Matthew in systematically disposed groups, such as the "Sermon on the Mount," or the "Charge to the Disciples." Luke presents the same material in scattered sections, much of it loosely strung together on the thread of a manifestly unhistorical travel narrative. Did they use different recensions of the same sources, or did they edit differently? Such questions have offered an inexhaustible supply of *Doktorfragen*, problems for the tyro to discuss in a Ph. D. dissertation which would exhibit his ingenuity even if it convinced no one. By and large, final solutions have not been reached.

The industrious investigation of the Synoptic problem which occupied students of the life of Jesus during the last third of the nineteenth century came to a climax in 1899 in two works, one English, the other German: Sir John Hawkins' *Horae Synopticae* and Paul Wernle's *The Synoptic Problem*.

Professor Maurice Goguel, as a French scholar, may be allowed to estimate their significance. The almost simultaneous publication, he says, of two works, "conceived from such different points of view but reaching the same conclusions, is a significant manifestation of the consensus which tends to establish itself among the majority of critics on the theory of the two sources."⁴ The veteran conservative, Theodor Zahn (1838-1933), claimed in 1897 and repeated in subsequent editions of his *Introduction* that there were no results of the study of the Gospels which hitherto had received general recognition or could claim to be well grounded. Such a statement as Goguel's, made in 1923, nearly a generation later, is sufficient justification for Holtzmann's severe remark in 1901 that Zahn's statement was a "notorious falsehood, a distortion, like almost every sentence in the whole book."⁵

IV. FOUR-DOCUMENT HYPOTHESES

The innumerable variations of the two-document hypothesis, none entirely satisfactory to any considerable number of scholars, are the only possible excuse for Zahn's unwarranted remarks, and differences of opinion among holders of the hypothesis were sufficient to indicate the need for further investigation. Four important substitutes have been proposed, one in America, one in England, and two in Germany. The American and English theories both discover four main documents. The American theory came in 1904 from Ernest DeWitt Burton (1856-1925) of the University of Chicago. He started, not as practically all scholars before him had done, from Matthew, but from Luke. The key to the Synoptic problem was to be discovered in the third Gospel since it uses Mark, and presumably, therefore, its other sources in their original order and incorporates them in blocks without "conflation," that is without intermingling the parallel accounts one with the other. Instead, it simply omits duplicate accounts. The re-

⁴*Introduction*, I, 99.

⁵*Die Synoptiker* ("Hand-Com. zum N. T."), 3d ed., 1901, p. VI.

sulting theory was too complicated and too mechanical to win general assent.

The second four-document hypothesis was much less radical and, being English, has been received with great acclaim in both England and America, but not in Germany and France. It was proposed by Burnett Hillman Streeter (1874-1937), formerly canon of Hereford, long fellow and lecturer at Oxford, and later provost of King's College, who was killed in an airplane accident in Switzerland in the summer of 1937. He was a member of Sanday's famous Oxford seminary on the Synoptic problem and had for years studied the whole subject with the closest attention. Along with F. Crawford Burkitt, he was regarded by many as one of the most original and independent of recent English scholars. His contribution toward the solution of the Synoptic problem was first broached in an article in the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1921, and then in completed form in *The Four Gospels in 1924*. His approach, like Burton's, was from Luke, a procedure which he credits to Burkitt who, in 1922, had written that Matthew was only a revised and augmented edition of Mark, but "Luke is a new historical work made by combining parts of Mark with parts of other documents."

Streeter very properly criticized and denied three unconscious assumptions of the two-document theory: (1) that there were no other sources to be compared with the "big two"; (2) that it is scientific to reduce the number of sources as far as possible; and (3) that the original sources would not have duplicated incidents or sayings. He went back to the sound principle of the Tübingen school, that the problems of the Gospels are not abstractly literary, but must be considered in the light of the history of the early church. Each document must have had a place in geography and in history. There must have been cycles of tradition in this or that place, just as families of manuscripts are traced to certain centers.

Starting, then, from Luke, he discovered that, when Mark

was eliminated, there still remained something which may truly be called a Gospel, for, he thought, as A. M. Perry, a student of Burton, had already argued (1919), that the Passion narrative in Luke is so different as to have been practically independent of Mark. When the discourse document also is eliminated, there still remains a series of incidents which form the historical framework. This remainder, L, plus Q, gives Streeter's Proto-Luke. His theory is that this material was gathered by Luke when he was in Palestine during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea. Later, Luke came upon Mark and, in some Greek city, Corinth perhaps, he combined Proto-Luke with Mark, in blocks as Burton had noted, but giving preference rather to his own original Gospel. With the preface of the infancy section, which is a translation of a Semitic document, this became the canonical Luke. According to Streeter, the fourth chief source, the material peculiar to Matthew, came from a Jerusalemite document of Judaistic tendencies, M.

Streeter's theory has little more positive evidence behind it than Burton's, but it marks much less of a break with the two-document theory than does Burton's, and, in essence, as regards Luke, it had already been advanced by Paul Feine, Bacon, Burton, and Vernon Bartlett. Therefore, it has been more easily accepted. That does not necessarily make it better, and, while several scholars of note, such as Vincent Taylor and B. S. Easton, have announced their adhesion to the new hypothesis as regards Luke, others, such as J. M. Creed and most German critics, are unconvinced. It remains to be seen whether it will stand the test of examination from various points of view.

V. NEW GERMAN THEORIES

Two recent German theories, without neglecting the old formulation of the problem, have also taken account of the new phase. One is from the famous historian, Eduard Meyer, the other from a hitherto not widely known pastor and church of-

ficial, Wilhelm Bussmann. Meyer, who passed away in 1930 at the age of seventy-six, published his analysis of the Gospel sources in 1921. Like Streeter, he was apparently quite oblivious of the new direction which the form-historical studies of younger German scholars were taking. The names which figure in his footnotes are those of men like Bousset and Harnack. Wellhausen is his *advocatus diaboli*. But unwittingly he brings to the fore the same questions which Dibelius and Bultmann were raising, for he was a historian and the chief problem was not just how the Gospels came to be what they are, but their historical value. His own most helpful contribution is to be seen in the parallels he brings forth out of his wide knowledge of other ancient historical documents. For a positivistic, non-religious, and nontheological scholar, his account of the sources may be called extremely conservative in many regards, while it is radical and original in others.

First, Meyer attempts what the majority of scholars have avoided, an analysis of Mark into its sources. Depending partly upon stylistic and literary criteria, but more upon content, he discovers, besides Mark 13, three main sources: an A and B form of a Disciple source, derived from Peter, and a Twelve source which arose at Jerusalem. As to the sources of Matthew and Luke, Meyer does not question the essential correctness of the two-document theory. Luke and Matthew both had special sources. Q was a collection of sayings, with little narrative and no account of the Passion. It is a "refraction" (*Brechung*) of the same common tradition which appears in another refraction in Mark, but—in this Meyer agrees with Wellhausen—it dates after A. D. 67, when Zacharias ben Baris-kaios was killed by two Zealots "in the midst of the Temple."

Bussmann's theory, based upon a much more detailed and exhaustive study of the Gospels and the literature of the subject, begins with an analysis of the two great documents of the generally accepted theory. Like Burton and Streeter, and un-

like Meyer, he starts from Luke, not from Mark. By the most careful and minute comparison of all peculiarities of language and thought, Bussmann discovers at least eight main documents besides other minor ones and he reconstructs the history of the writing of the Gospels in an interesting manner. But the whole theory misunderstands the popular, nonliterary character of the sources and is too artificial and complicated to win assent.

To be sure, Bussmann's results, which represent years of painstaking study, should not be hastily judged. They may eventually prove to have hit upon some new insights. Indeed the hypotheses of Burton, Streeter, Meyer, and Bussmann, along with such works as Arthur Temple Cadoux's discussion of *The Sources of the Second Gospel* (1935) and J. M. C. Crum's *The Original Jerusalem Gospel* (1927), and *St. Mark's Gospel* (1936) deserve to be carefully weighed in the hope that in some direction permanent advance may be made beyond the two-document hypothesis. None of these theories, not even Meyer's and Bussmann's, have received much attention in Germany, where scholars are now preoccupied with other questions. On both sides of the Atlantic one hears doubts expressed—often not for publication—as to the validity of the two-document hypothesis, but Schlatter's attack upon it has received no applause. The discovery of some other Gospel, such as that of which Doctor H. Idris Bell of the British Museum has recently published a leaf, may throw unexpected light upon the whole problem by disclosing some other document or source like Q, or like the hypothetical documents of these more recent analyses. Whatever the eventual evaluation of the labours of Burton, Streeter, Meyer, and Bussmann, they may serve as a sample of what scholars are now attempting to do in the criticism of the sources of Jesus' life. How far criticism has come since the days of Strauss and Baur is clear. But for the time being progress is at a standstill.

CHAPTER XI

ORAL TRADITION ITS FORMS AND LIFE SITUATIONS

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TECHNIQUE

JUST at the close of the World War, before the announcement of Canon Streeter's new solution of the Synoptic problem, moribund interest in the old problem was suddenly eclipsed by a new type of study, *Formgeschichte*, or "form history." Within two years, 1919 to 1921, four German scholars, Martin Dibelius, Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Albertz, and Rudolf Bultmann, independently produced original and thought-provoking studies of the various forms, or types, or categories, of the preliterate traditions regarding the life of Jesus. Within five years, the new movement had so far developed as to require a historian, Erich Fascher, to record its progress, for numerous studies based upon the form-history point of view were being published, and it began to appear as if the new method had suddenly set the hitherto hobbled student of the Synoptics free in unlimited green pastures. The new critical methods seemed to promise objective criteria by which to determine the date and historical value of the various original elements of the oral tradition.

It seems usually to be overlooked that form history is a complicated study which is based upon different approaches to the problems and involves different processes growing out of different purposes. Fascher insists that form history is primarily interested in making clear the tendencies and driving impulses of the tradition. It begins, however, by classifying and labelling

the various types of tradition.¹ Where formerly the interpreter spoke of parable, allegory, paradox, epigram, maxim, parenetic discourse, miracle story, travel narrative, and the passion narrative, he now is confronted with a very different and, historically speaking, much more significant classification of the materials into various types, or forms, such as miracle stories, apothegms, paradigms, proverbs, biographical anecdotes, exhortations, and apocalyptic sayings. Having isolated the various types and determined their character, the next step is to put each back into its concrete setting, its "life-situation" (*Sitz im Leben*), and so to determine what led to the formation of each particular type and how each separate saying or story has been affected by the growth of the tradition.

This is form history, but it has already passed over into its second phase, form criticism, the attempt to determine those forms, or categories, which have their "life-situation" wholly in the apostolic age, whether in Palestine or the Hellenistic world, and those which belong to Jesus' own lifetime. Thus form criticism presumes to discover the historical value of the traditions regarding the life and teachings of Jesus.

II. THE BEGINNINGS OF FORM HISTORY

The interests and ideas upon which form history is based are by no means new. Its basic assumption is the theory of Schleiermacher, that the original elements out of which the Gospels were constructed were single anecdotes, or stories, (*diegeseis*), combined with Strauss's idea that these were not the creations of individuals but were social products. Herder, whose critical and sympathetic insight provided a real preview of nearly all of the developments of criticism during the last century and a half, caught a true glimpse of the conditions which surrounded the early Christians as modern criticism now discovers them. His understanding of the Orient and

¹Jülicher-Fascher, *Einleitung*, p. 349.

of folk poetry enabled him to see that the Gospels were not the artistic, or artificial, products of conscious endeavour, but naïve creations of the popular mind. Another poet, Friedrich Adolf Krummacker (1767-1845), and the much-criticized Johann Gottfried Eichhorn approached the problems in somewhat the same manner.

Gieseler was a forerunner of form history in his hypothesis that the Synoptics were directly derived from oral tradition. Strauss adopted this hypothesis and, with right, emphasized the social origin of the Gospel stories. Fascher calls Strauss the "spiritual ancestor" of Bultmann's conception of the problem. Baur and his school insisted that the Gospels must be understood from their place in the historical development of Christian life and thought, but they overlooked their popular character and made them literary representatives of theological tendencies. The problem of their sources was ignored. Weisse, Wilke, Weizsäcker, Holtzmann, and all of the men who gradually untangled the strands of the Synoptic puzzle, were driven to reject Gieseler's oral tradition and, in their preoccupation with the literary relations of the three Gospels, they overlooked the preliterate, oral stage which must have come first.

This was not, however, true of all. Preparation for form criticism was made by several recent scholars who began to analyze biblical materials more carefully against a background of sharper and clearer conceptions of the conditions under which the authors wrote. Two who deserve special mention were primarily Old Testament students. Julius Wellhausen argued that Mark had not had a variety of sources before him, but a limited amount of oral tradition which had already received a blunt, popular character from its circulation in the mouths of the people. Mark's editorial arrangement, framework, and comments, added to this tradition, made the Gospel. Thus Wellhausen emphasized the social background and the popular influences which shaped the tradition.

Hermann Gunkel is credited with having suggested the basic principles which underlie the form-history method. Especially in the 1917 revision of his commentary on Genesis he made clear two points of view which he admittedly took from Herder and which, he insisted, profoundly affect the criticism of the strata of the Hexateuch: (1) the sources were essentially legendary or mythical and were not to be viewed with the eye of the Western, matter-of-fact historian; (2) these legends were not the work of single writers, but of schools of story-tellers, and they were the products of popular, oral tradition, not of literary art. The principles which governed the production of such popular stories were set forth best in an article by A. Olrik on "The Epic Laws of Folk Poetry."² Various writers were beginning to apply the principles, more or less unconsciously, to the Gospels, for the subject was "in the air." With the four men above mentioned (Dibelius, Schmidt, Albertz and Bultmann) it came down to earth and assumed concrete form.

III. CRITICISM BY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Credit for the use and development of the new technique does not belong exclusively to German writers. What was truly new in the studies which, in 1919-21, inaugurated the movement was the attempt to devise minute and rigid classifications of the numerous preliterate "forms." The idea of putting the Gospel materials into their historical situations and thus determining their dependability was far from new. F. Crawford Burkitt in his *Gospel History and Its Transmission* (1906) had clearly enunciated the principle as one already long practiced. But the criterion was applied rather to the written Gospels.

This was true also of Benjamin Wisner Bacon. Admittedly, he did not make such outstanding and original contributions to the criticism of the Synoptic Gospels as to that of the fourth, but he cannot be overlooked. In his *Beginnings of Gospel Story*

²"Die epischen Gesetze der Volksdichtung," in *Zeitschr. f. deutsches Altertum*, LI (1909), 1-12.

(1909), *Is Mark a Roman Gospel* (1919), *The Gospel of Mark* (1926) and *Studies in Matthew* (1930), he subjected the first two Gospels—and to no small extent the third—to as rigorous a scrutiny as any Continental critic ever used. He does not explicitly use the methods of form criticism nor even refer to them. Nevertheless, he was working—less drastically and systematically—in the same direction and reached somewhat similar results. His last publication on the subject appeared in an article with the characteristic title, “Reading the Gospels Backwards.”³ In it he classified the interests of the Church which appear in the Gospels as evangelism, paranesis, catechesis, apologetics, and doctrine. Each Gospel, he said, was written for the sake of a Q. E. D. at the end. Thus Bacon was clearly and consciously seeking to discover the interests and impulses of the early church which produced the varied elements of the Gospels, but without the rigid classification of genuine form history.

In the same sense credit for contributions to form-history studies belongs to the famous French New Testament scholar and modernist, Alfred Loisy. At the Congrès d'histoire du christianisme, held as a Jubilee celebration in honour of M. Loisy, he was greeted as one of the fathers of the form-history movement. He replied that he did not know whether he was father or son, but, in any case, he was devoted to the idea. His contribution lies, not in the minute analysis of the Gospel materials into their “forms,” but in the effort to discover the influences which produced them and in the recognition that the materials were the product of certain outstanding interests of the early church. True to his long experience as priest and catechist, he discovered two such interests, cult and catechism. The Gospels were anything but historical sources; they were rather books of religion, and that exclusively. While valiantly maintaining the historicity of Jesus against the mythologues, Loisy reached the conclusion that little could be known about him. However, he makes the

³HJ, XXX (1931-32), 76-90.

reservation that "novelty is not always verity," and avers that the form-history child has been reared to a decidedly overgrown manhood by Dibelius, Bultmann, and others.⁴

The recent "Chicago School" had already elaborated and applied the assumed but unsystematized basic element which the form historians call the "life situation" in a way which was unknown among earlier critics. The chief advance which this group has made is to be seen in their thoroughly socialized view of history. Under influences set in motion by Albion W. Small, John Dewey, and the departments of Sociology and Philosophy at the University of Chicago and, indeed the whole sociological movement in America, members of the faculty of the University of Chicago Divinity School early began to study the social background of the New Testament from a modern sociological point of view, attempting to understand the New Testament writings as products of their age.

In particular what may be called "criticism by social environment" was developed by Professor S. J. Case and his students. This method was formulated concurrently with the beginnings of the form-history method in Germany and was independent of it. It appears faintly in Professor Case's *Evolution of Early Christianity* (1923). The principles are fully stated in his *Jesus* (1927). An excellent application is made in Professor Donald W. Riddle's volume, *The Martyrs, a Study in Social Control* (1931), combining form history and the social-historical method. He puts the basic principle succinctly: "Agreement with known environment is the criterion by which a datum is identified as authentic, that is, having actually come from Jesus or as having been produced by a Christian community."⁵

The social experience of each Gospel writer and of various

⁴*Congrès d'histoire du christianisme*, ed. P. L. Couchoud, Paris: Rieder, 1928, III, 248; Ch. Guignebert, *Jésus*, Paris: Renaissance du Livre, 1933, p. 58; E. T. (New York: Knopf, 1935), p. 62; Loisy, *l'Évang. selon Luc*, Paris: Nourry, 1924, pp. 22 f.; *Mémoires*, Paris: Nourry, 1930-31, III, 531.

⁵P. 210; cf. pp. 207-11.

groups is mirrored in the narratives. The Synoptics, even as the fourth Gospel, are missionary propaganda. All the Gospels, even those called apocryphal, are to be tested by the same criteria. The Palestinian Jewish environment, the conditions and problems of the primitive Palestinian Christian community, and the very different conditions under which the Gentile mission was carried on furnish criticism with more or less clear-cut marks of origin.

IV. METHODS AND CONCLUSIONS

An extremely important contribution, which anticipated form history, was made by Karl Ludwig Schmidt in his *Framework of the Story of Jesus*, which appeared in 1919 after the basic volume of Dibelius, but which had actually been completed two years earlier. Schmidt showed that a large part of the verses which give the geographical and chronological setting of the various sayings and events of Jesus' life were the work of the Evangelists. This does not mean that none of the geographical and chronological notices in the Gospels is historically trustworthy. Schmidt and the form-history school have given way to unnecessary skepticism. They have also depreciated Mark too much. He knows the geography of Palestine better than any other of the Evangelists, and he probably comes nearer to a chronological order, as opposed to a topical one. But it is true that there is no certainty as to the course of Jesus' ministry or the development of his thinking. Therefore the Marcan outline, which was the basis of such lives of Jesus as that of Oscar Holtzmann, is utterly undependable. Schmidt thus laid the logical foundation for the earlier work of Dibelius.

The credit for introducing the term, "form history," and the full-orbed method belongs to Martin Dibelius, since 1915 New Testament professor in Heidelberg in succession to Johannes Weiss, Adolf Deissmann, Karl Holsten, Heinrich Holtzmann, Adolf Hausrath, and eventually the redoubtable Paulus. Dibe-

lius gives immediate credit for the idea to suggestions from Hermann Gunkel, Adolf Deissmann, and Eduard Norden. From the latter he borrowed the term, *Formgeschichte*, but gave it a new application. By means of the most careful analysis of the Gospels, section by section and verse by verse, down to the minutest detail, the method attempts to discover the *Sitz im Leben* of every passage, that is its "place in the stream of life." A gradual sharpening of critical insight among modern scholars, due especially to the studies of Gunkel, Deissmann, and others in the popular, the naïve, the folk element, discovers again, after Herder, that the Synoptic Gospels are not the product of literary art, but are rather collections of popular traditions, more like folklore than literature. Such popular literature, like the Negro spiritual, has its definite forms, or types, comparable to ballad, fable, fairy story, and myth. The "forms" are not to be judged by æsthetic standards, although they may have developed into æsthetic means of expression, for they are social products. These different categories, or types, of tradition make it possible to determine the *Sitz im Leben*, i.e., "the historical and social stratum," in which precisely such literary forms were developed. Form history, then, is a study of the various literary forms in which oral tradition took shape and the circumstances under which they arose.

The proponents of the form-history method are far from being at one in their classification of the various forms, or types. In the Gospels Dibelius finds sermons and narrative forms. All these represent the efforts of the early Christians to present Jesus to their hearers. The missionary sermons included hortatory, didactic, and apologetic material. In order to convince their hearers and instruct their converts they had to present material from Jesus' life and teachings. This material took the form of brief, illustrative stories, which Dibelius has named "paradigms," or models, telling of Jesus' method and matter. They include miracle tales, legends, exhortations, and the par-

ables, and were used to enforce the points made in the missionary sermons. Myth, that is an account of a being regarded as divine, according to Dibelius, appears in only three stories, those of the Baptism, Temptation, and Transfiguration, and as an element in certain tales and in the saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour."

Mark found all of these materials in complete disorder. Only the incidents of the Passion had already been constructed into a continuous narrative. While Riddle would make this narrative a primitive martyrology, intended to strengthen Christians for the extreme trial, its motif is soteriological according to Dibelius.⁶ Some other incidents had already been joined together also (Jesus' last journey should be included), but no complete account of Jesus' ministry had been constructed until Mark undertook the task. He added certain details of names and places which he knew; he made some connections on the basis of inference. But chiefly he was guided by the idea of the messianic secret, as Wrede had argued. Mark is a "book of secret epiphanies . . . dominated by a soteriological motive." The Q collection was due to the desire to "derive as much exhortation as possible from the words of Jesus," exhortations such as form a considerable part of the letters of Paul and the other epistolary literature of the early church. The constructive results of Dibelius' use of form criticism are well set forth in his concise lectures on *Gospel Criticism*, delivered in October, 1934. In his case the minutiae of criticism, with the discovery of propagandist and Christological motives in the documents, do not obscure, but rather clarify, the figure of the historical Jesus.

The case is otherwise with the form criticism of Rudolf Bultmann of Marburg. His *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, although it did not appear until 1921, was worked out inde-

⁶Riddle, *op. cit.*; Dibelius, *Gospel Criticism and Christology*, London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935; *Die Botschaft von Jesus Christus*, Tübingen, 1933; E. T., *The Message of Jesus*, New York: Scribners, 1939.

pendently of Dibelius. It is impossible here to discuss his much more exhaustive analysis. To mention only the chief divisions, he distinguishes among the words of Jesus "apothegms," that is pregnant sayings of Jesus which form the climax of a short story, and "words of the Lord," (*Herrenworte*), sayings which have no framework. The rest is merely "supplementary material," and includes miracle stories, healing and nature miracles, and historical narrative and legend. The results of Bultmann's analysis, based upon a highly subjective approach, are much more negative than those of Dibelius. Only a few sayings and incidents are regarded as fully historical.

It was, therefore, a great surprise when his little volume, *Jesus*, appeared in 1926, to discover that what he had given away with the left hand of criticism he had recovered with the right hand of Barthian dogmatism. In that, indeed, he was only following, much more closely than he usually does, the example of Karl Barth, who constantly pays lip service to criticism, only to disregard all rules of interpretation in order to read his own dogmatic beliefs into the Scriptures. But Bultmann's brilliant picture of a Barthian Jesus calling upon men to face the great eschatological crisis means no sudden abandonment of his form-critical views. Rather, as Julius Schniewind has pointed out, Bultmann has portrayed, not a historical Jesus but what the "name of Jesus" meant to the early Christians.

The subject of form history has proved most enticing and, in fifteen years, its literature has assumed alarming proportions. Certain valuable contributions, some real advances, must be welcomed. Form history has rightly insisted on the social, or folk, element in the Gospels. It has laid needed emphasis upon criticism by social environment, or social-historical criticism. It is now more clearly recognized that very considerable portions of the Gospels have been shaped, if not produced, by the needs and interests of the early Christians. The more carefully all of the circumstances under which the Gospels were pro-

duced are examined, the less ground appears for maintaining that the early church was interested in preserving sources, as such, for a biography of Jesus.

The chief concern of the first believers was salvation; their dominating idea was that this salvation would be gloriously complete in a few days or years when their Master should appear on the clouds of heaven to inaugurate his kingdom. Every day their "salvation was nearer than when they first believed." There were many minor interests. Controversies with Jews led to the repetition and expansion of whatever Jesus had said in criticism of Judaism. Controversies with the followers of John the Baptist and with mystical and philosophical sects all over the Near East, as well as the mystical tendencies of believers, led to the introduction, expansion, and composition of relevant sayings of Jesus that could serve apologetics and satisfy the heart's longings. Ethical problems led to the preservation and development of "commands" of Jesus on marriage, wealth, and similar subjects. The competition of Jewish and heathen magicians, miracle workers, and healing cults led to the multiplication and expansion of miracle stories, some on Palestinian, some on Hellenistic soil. Erich Fascher says:

To carry on form history means, not to distinguish literary types rigidly and paste labels on them, but to comprehend their formation out of living tradition. . . . By smashing the framework of the story of Jesus and consistently fixing attention on the single elements, it has opened the way for a kind of work which corresponds to the process by which the Synoptics came into being and has freed us from the purely paste-and-scissors, mechanical analysis of sources.⁷

That is true if emphasis is laid on the merely mechanical and statistical methods which too often have been exploited as complete and final solutions of the Synoptic problem. A recent

⁷Jülicher-Fascher, *Einleitung*, pp. 349, 368 ff.

volume by an American, though published in German under the ægis of Bultmann, takes a highly favourable view of form criticism. In his *Form History and Synoptic Source Analysis* (1937), Doctor Kendrick Grobel has carefully analyzed the labours of Dibelius and Bultmann and then of six German and seven American and English scholars who, since 1912, have attacked the Synoptic problem. His conclusion is that, in the study of the problem, no progress has been made and none is possible beyond the two-document theory, consequently that the way to new discoveries lies in the direction of form criticism, with its depreciation of the historical value of the Synoptic tradition.

In view of the negative and disappointing results of form criticism, this seems a distorted view. In the hands of the more radical form historians, Gospel criticism has made a full circle within the century. It has come back to Strauss's position and even gone beyond it, using much more elaborate and apparently much more deadly artillery with which to bombard the sources of Jesus' life. Deplorable results would have to be accepted if obtained by irreproachable methods. But it is exactly the methodology of form criticism which is questionable. If Synoptic criticism has suffered from mechanical, paste-and-scissors methods, form criticism must plead guilty to just the opposite sin. Its forms do not furnish objective historical criteria. As Bultmann explicitly admits, it works in a circle, using the Gospel material to provide the criteria and then turning these criteria upon the Gospels. Its presuppositions may be as skeptical as were those of Straussian myth criticism, and such presuppositions determine results. It has become, not a tool for careful excavation, but a steam shovel for the removal of debris.

Much more careful study must be made of Jewish as well as Hellenistic parallels, both to the individual forms, or types, and to the Gospels as wholes. The historical soil out of which the Gospels grew must be known much better before any de-

gree of certainty can be reached. At this point, above all, critically sifted independent sources are a supreme desideratum. Criticism by social environment is impossible if the social environment is not known. At present it is not known in detail, and, therefore, only general and tentative conclusions are possible. The worst pitfall for the critic is his desire to know more than his sources tell him.

Doctor MacKinley Helm of Harvard University believes that form criticism has seen its best days.⁸ In any case it must not for a moment be supposed that it can permanently displace Synoptic criticism. But certainly the comparison of the literary documents must proceed upon the basis of whatever assured results form criticism discovers. When the new method and its results are assimilated, it may be possible to return to the older problems with new insight and improved techniques which will make real discoveries possible. Certainly it is true that the Synoptic problem is far from finally settled. The two-document theory needs reconsideration and perhaps reconstruction. It should not be allowed to assume the position which Archbishop Usher's chronology once held in the pious mind. It is no mortal sin to add other chief documents or to dissect either of the two. It must be admitted that no one has as yet successfully performed either feat. Streeter's theory is *sub judice*. Bussmann has surely been premature in his detailed reconstruction of documents. But all such attempts must be studied with open mind. Doctor Helm and Professor M. S. Enslin of Crozer Theological Seminary would reject the Q hypothesis and other multi-document theories, making Luke dependent on Mark and Matthew, and Doctor Helm would date the three Synoptics in the sixties. Thus, though he specifically admits the early growth of legends around the heroic figure of Jesus, he gives basis for a claim of greater dependability for the Gospel accounts. As to final and universally acceptable results one cannot be extremely hopeful

⁸*After Pentecost*, New York and London: Harper, 1936, pp. 136-57.

unless new documents or new evidence of some kind is forthcoming.

What new sources or new methods may be discovered to throw light upon the dark period when the New Testament literature was taking shape no one can say. Archæology may discover new documents. It certainly can do much more to provide materials for a clearer picture of Palestinian and Syrian culture in the first century of Christian history. The Talmud is a vast sea of materials which have hardly been touched by careful criticism, a great treasure cave whose forbidding aspect has frightened Christian scholars away.

The refinement of the methods of form criticism will make the new method more valuable. C. H. Dodd's recent lectures, *History and the Gospel* (1938), like Vincent Taylor's *Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (1933), use the method to reach more positive conclusions. It seems to be necessary for its proponents to learn that the New Testament, however truly a folk literature in part, is still very different from Norse sagas, German fairy tales, Jewish haggadah and midrash, and Hellenistic hero legends and cult myths. There are points at which comparison with these materials is a valuable aid. But it should not be assumed that the Gospel sources are unhistorical and subject to the same laws as fairy tales and mythology. The Synoptic materials took shape and the Gospels were written during the first Christian generation, or before the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life had all passed away. It is safe to say that the Gospel of John would have been impossible in Palestine or Syria in 65 A.D. The unforgettable impression which Jesus had made upon his friends, the indescribable significance of his life and words in their theories of the salvation which he had wrought for them, gave accounts of his life a value that led to exaggeration and overemphasis on some features in the earlier years, but would not allow serious falsification and distortion such as the fourth Gospel exhibits.

We owe the form of the Gospels to their soteriological theories. In view of their cultural limitations, those theories are far from binding upon us, even though we trust their reports of Jesus' words and actions. Each of the Synoptic Gospels is an attempt to restore a stained-glass window that has been shattered and is only partially preserved. Each of the three evangelists had a theory as to what the original picture was, and he made his framework and replaced missing fragments here and there to produce a picture that suited his theory. The modern student must try to distinguish the restored from the original fragments and then to piece the genuine parts together so as to restore a part of the original. The complete composition in all its first beauty and power is unattainable, but we can restore what is necessary to flood the cathedral again with the divine light of an incomparable life.

PART V

THE SEARCH FOR AN HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

SUMMARY

XII. The presuppositions of the historian, like those of other students, determine his results. During the nineteenth century there was gradual progress from supernaturalistic presuppositions, such as Neander boldly proclaimed, to more scientific attitudes. A series of progressive and unorthodox lives of Jesus, then a series of studies based on Ritschlian historicism and dogmatism, prepared for the "liberal" accounts at the beginning of the twentieth century by Oskar Holtzmann, Gustav Frenssen, and Adolf Harnack. But criticism of Alfred Loisy's kind and the impact of "consistent eschatology" destroyed the "liberal" conception of Jesus.

XIII. The most troublesome problem at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was that of Jesus' "self-consciousness." Loisy and Schweitzer, following Johannes Weiss, made him a consistent eschatologist. Schweitzer described the long historical process which transformed the orthodox Jesus into the "liberal" Jesus who was merely a prophetic social reformer, how this conception broke down in the face of a realistic interpretation of the records of Jesus' life and times, and how its place was taken by the Jesus who awaited the immediate supernatural advent of the reign of God and his own return as the glorified messiah. Some have held that Jesus never thought of himself as the messiah. But various studies have shown that, while Schweitzer's view is too "consistent," Jesus probably did believe himself to be the true but hidden messiah whose sufferings should usher in the reign of God on earth.

XIV. The "social gospel" of the Carpenter of Nazareth was directly attacked and, to many, completely destroyed by consistent eschatology. The Kantian-Ritschlian conception of the kingdom of God within the heart had exactly suited the "liberal" picture of Jesus as a prophet of spiritual religion and social reform. With the development of the social conscience toward the end of the nineteenth century, this view spread rapidly in Germany, France, England, and America. Now the critical-historical interpretation of Jesus, along with "consistent eschatology" and post-war pessi-

mism, has caused a violent swing of the pendulum to the other side. Yet, like all prophetic spirits before him, Jesus believed passionately in social justice. He expected the coming reign of God to revolutionize society, though through miraculous, not social, forces. Unfortunately, a large number of socially minded Christians based their hopes on an uncritical evolutionary optimism and sought religious sanctions in unscientific interpretations of Jesus and his teachings.

XV. The twentieth century has shown remarkable fluctuations and contradictions in its conceptions of Jesus. There have been a growing tolerance and an increasing appreciation of critical method. Lives by novelists, though varying remarkably in critical quality, have shown and caused increased interest in Jesus. Critical lives by competent scholars have also exhibited a great variety of results. The chief reasons for these disappointing variations have been two: differences as to the rigour of historical method and, still more, uncertainties as to the philosophy of history into which to incorporate the historical Jesus.

XVI. The problem of historical method has been partially solved, and a considerable number of critical scholars agree on the essential results of Synoptic and form criticism. The chief problem, that of the nature of history, is much farther from solution, because it is essentially a Christological problem. The social, philosophical, and theological views of many English and Continental (including Barthian) scholars are almost irreconcilable with those of the growing school of American realists. A satisfactory view must involve a synthesis of ideas based on scientific, philosophical, social, and religious data, not theologically but realistically viewed. In such a view, based, not on theory or dogma, but on actual experience, history will be accepted as God's education of the human race, and Jesus, because of his unique insights into human values, will be the supreme Teacher, since his words, his life, and his death give meaning to history in all its complexities and contradictions.

CHAPTER XII

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY JESUS A REINTERPRETATION FOR MODERN EMANCIPATED MAN

I. THE PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

THE nineteenth century, like those before it, must needs have a Jesus to suit its conceptions of life and of the world. Not only had the records of Jesus' life to be subjected to the current rules and methods of historical criticism, but Jesus himself had to conform to the ideals of life which were the fashion as determined by the findings of a psychology and a philosophy which were conditioned by natural science, materialism, evolutionary theory, and a bitter reaction against superstition and authority. The consequent reinterpretations of Jesus varied according to the extent of each author's emancipation from the dogmas of the past and of his participation in the new attitudes toward life and the universe.

The discussion of the foregoing chapters was unnecessary to demonstrate what is self-evident, that the final and fundamental problem is the interpretation of the materials. In practice, if not in theory, criticism and interpretation are inextricably intertwined. It is as dishonest as it is silly for any historian to claim that he approaches his sources and makes his reconstructions without prepossessions or assumptions. In reporting Jesus' life, as in reporting every historical event, the original

narrators—the participants and eyewitnesses—based their accounts upon their own assumptions and their sense of values. Their presuppositions and their value-judgments determined not only what they selected to narrate but actually what they saw. The authors of the Gospels, again, selected from the traditions of the eyewitnesses and wrote according to their own assumptions and their sense of value and of need. Out of these materials, thus coloured in their manufacture, their selection, and their combination by the early narrators' theories, the modern historian has to arrive at an interpretation of Jesus' character which seems to him self-consistent and historically reasonable. His interpretation depends upon his selection of materials; his selection of materials, that is his historical criticism, depends upon his theory of interpretation, his philosophy of history, and his theological ideas; and these, again, are partly determined by his sense of need and his judgments of value. This is equally true of the orthodox and the heterodox, of the conservative and the liberal lives of Jesus.

In this respect the New Testament historian is, indeed, in no worse position than the "profane" historian, who writes of Socrates, Alexander, or Tiberius. Moreover, all this is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the work of the modern geologist, physicist, and biologist, although the nature of their documents lessens the subjective element and makes it easier for them to deny its presence. There is no "presuppositionless science," no *voraussetzungslose Wissenschaft*. The scientist cannot work without preliminary assumptions in the form of hypotheses. He really should have more than one, several if possible. The basic requirement is that they shall be clearly recognized and stated. The scientific attitude in history and the social sciences, as in the physical sciences, is distinguished chiefly by lack of dogmatism, by readiness to seek new evidence and to change hypothetical interpretations of the phenomena to suit new data; that is, by readiness to conceive and accept a new hypothesis

when an old one proves unsatisfactory. What has just been said applies to every problem thus far discussed. But it needs to be emphasized as one approaches the central problems of the life of Jesus.

II. PROGRESS TOWARD A HISTORICAL STUDY OF JESUS

In every one there are inherited attitudes of mind and assumptions of fact of which he is quite unconscious. This is especially true in matters of family, race, nationality, and religion. When attention is called to these prejudices, reaction may be strong in the opposite direction. Lives of Jesus usually sail under the one or the other of two banners, ancient prejudice or modern anti-traditionalism. Belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures or at least in plenary inspiration, traditional soteriology, inherited reverence for Jesus as an authority, some or all of these dominate the conservative "lives of Christ." The authority of Jesus is used to support accepted creeds, whether ecclesiastical, or moral, or racial. Reaction against any or all of these swings wide. The self-criticism which recognizes the fact of a "personal equation" and which consciously and conscientiously strives to discount its own prejudices and prepossessions may partially succeed in sailing safely between Scylla and Charybdis. The story of the development of the conception of Jesus in the nineteenth century is the story of the gradual emergence of the conscientious effort to be honest, under the influence, if not the domination, of a succession of scientific or social fads and theories.

Before Strauss no life of Jesus had been published, whether Catholic or Protestant, pietistic or rationalistic, which made any considerable direct contribution toward the recovery of the historical Jesus. Reimarus, Lessing, Herder, and others contributed indirectly by assisting in the application of critical method. Reimarus raised the problem of historical cause and effect. Herder's two accounts, one after the Synoptists and one

after John, suggested another of the principal problems, that of the sources. But the time was ripe for neither problem.¹

The paraphrasing *Life History of Jesus* by Johann Jakob Hess (1774-76) is noteworthy as being the first to attempt a pragmatic account of Jesus' life. It combined the Synoptics with John, rationalized the teachings of Jesus, and explained miracles away where possible, but without attacking miracle as such or denying the reality of the virgin birth or the resurrection. The more thoroughly rationalistic Paulus was impossibly naïve in his attempt to eliminate all the miracles by petty and painful exegetical expedients. Paulus was sincerely a follower of science as he knew it, but his science was false.²

One other sincerely scientific historical account of the life and work of Jesus was known to Strauss in fragmentary fashion when he began his critical examination of the records, that of Schleiermacher.³ It was largely dissatisfaction with both Paulus and Schleiermacher that occasioned the writing of Strauss's own momentous work. One can understand his reaction of disgust to Paulus' unwieldy technique and unattractive form. Why he should have been equally impatient with Schleiermacher's conception of Jesus is less easy to understand. Schleiermacher's inauguration of a university course of lectures on the life of Jesus in 1819-20 was an innovation which made an extraordinary impression. Such a course must maintain its academic character as a scientific, historical, undogmatic discussion. Few had believed that possible. The course was repeated four times, in 1821, 1823, 1829-30, and for the last time in the summer of 1832. But the lectures, delivered extempore as was Schleiermacher's custom, were never written out, and were not published until 1864, when they were recovered from the lecturer's scattered notes and students' notebooks. By that time new points of view and new interests rendered the lectures which had inspired an earlier generation entirely antiquated.

¹See above, pp. 37 f. ²See above, pp. 48 f. ³See above, pp. 43-46.

The basic reasons for Strauss's disgust with Schleiermacher were probably two: his use of the fourth Gospel and his equivocal attitude toward miracles. The latter word, according to Schleiermacher, might mean no more than "extraordinary event." Many miracles were purely natural, only misunderstood. Others, however, might move out into the region of elementary natural forces. His mystically motivated preference for the fourth Gospel fixed the outline of the ministry into which the events of the Synoptics had to be fitted and also determined the character of Jesus. He was supposed to be a human being living a purely human life. But he could not make or alter plans for his life. He adopted the idea of the kingdom solely in order to interpret his purely inner moral ideal. His purpose was "to carry over to men his own life, to make them such as were entirely ordered by the will of God and to found a reign of the divine will beginning with his person."

One of Schleiermacher's contributions was his definition of the purpose and method of a discussion of Jesus' life. The approach must be made, not from the basis of faith alone, but also from that of the impartial criticism of both friendly and hostile opinion. The chief task was to conceive Jesus' inner character so clearly that with some assurance one could imagine him transplanted to new conditions and surroundings and know what he would be there also. Schleiermacher inaugurated the search for the historical Jesus less dramatically and less polemically than Strauss. It was most unfortunate that his conception of Jesus was not made known to the larger reading public. Its Johannine outline might have nullified or at least restricted its value as a stimulus to scientific research, but it was much more suggestive than Neander's conservative volume, which appeared shortly after Schleiermacher's death.

That "life," which did serve as an antidote to Strauss, was much less original than Schleiermacher's. Strauss had challenged his critics to refute his argument by producing an ac-

count which would more successfully place Jesus in the current of history. Out of the fracas there came one dignified "life of Christ" which seriously attempted to meet the challenge. The former Jew, David Mendel, to whom conversion meant so much that he called himself Neander, a "new man," was already a professor at Berlin, a famous church historian, and one of the most influential theologians in Germany when, in 1837, he published his *Leben Jesu*. Because of its real scholarship, its author's reputation for saintliness, and its want of vituperation, the work long enjoyed wide popularity, even among many who thought it too liberal.

However, there was no adequate discussion of the sources and no real study either of the historical background or of historical problems. As the revelation of absolute truth, Jesus was above history. Miracles were but elements in the divine revelation, omnipotence at work in nature but behind a veil. As John was fully authentic and historical, the other Gospels were harmonized with it, on the whole with great deftness. Jesus, of course, knew of his messianic mission from the beginning and went to Jerusalem according to God's will, and with the assurance that by his death his spiritual kingdom would be realized. Neander frankly stated his presuppositions: "The belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" in an entirely unique sense must be assumed. Otherwise the narratives are unintelligible. The miraculous conception was demanded a priori and confirmed a posteriori. Freedom from presuppositions was impossible. These presuppositions were founded in the moral order of the universe.

It is not unfair to say that all conservative lives since Neander have followed very much his pattern. Down to the present day they accept the miracle stories more or less without question or rationalizing interpretations. They follow the Johannine outline and picture a Jesus who walks through the earth without touching the ground. As the century progressed they came to

spend much time on the historical background. Men like Edersheim, Geikie, and Waibnitz made large though uncritical contributions from Jewish sources. Some, such as Farrar, even achieved a certain realistic plasticity in their accounts, but with all their vivid stage decorations, they did not make Jesus a genuine human being.

III. PROGRESSIVE AND UNORTHODOX LIVES

While conservative writers were paying lip service to the changing gods of the modern science-ridden world, others were fashioning their Christs after new patterns. That remarkable decade, 1859-69, when Japan's modern government was created, when the Union Pacific Railway, the laying of the Atlantic cable, and the Suez Canal were completed, when slaves were emancipated in two hemispheres, was also a decade of the crystallization of new ideas. Few brief periods can boast more epoch-making books than Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the sensational *Essays and Reviews*, Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, Schenkel's *Charakterbild Jesu*, and Strauss's *New Life of Jesus*. In the year 1863 two startling books appeared. The one, H. J. Holtzmann's *Synoptic Gospels*, aroused little comment outside of theological circles, but laid the foundations for future achievements. The other, Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, made a tremendous impression upon the general public but no direct contribution to scientific progress. It was the work of a man who was, first of all, a literary artist and, secondly, enough of a scholar to give his imaginative reconstruction of the figure of Jesus the verisimilitude of an authentic portrait.

Renan's plan for a life of Jesus was conceived when he was riding over the hills of Palestine with Henriette, the sister to whom he owed everything and whom he left behind in a lonely grave at Byblos. The book reflected all the popular currents—social humanitarianism, naturalistic detail, romantic sentiment, and pastoral idyllicism—which pervaded the con-

temporary literary atmosphere. While making a pretense to historical criticism, it actually borrowed the canons of the Strasbourg Protestant scholars, only to destroy all criticism by using the fourth Gospel as a source. As if this offense against scholarship were not enough, it added a frontal insult to good taste and pious reverence by making its proletarian hero a miracle monger who was both charlatan and dupe. It was "history raised to the level of the novel." As such it gave the story of Jesus a popular vogue hitherto unknown, but completely distorted the picture of its hero.

Among the numerous lives of Christ which the remainder of the century produced three deserve mention because of distinguished contributions and wide influence, those of Seeley, Schenkel, and Keim. When *Ecce Homo* was published anonymously in 1865, it created a furor which is now difficult to understand. It claimed to be only a fragment, the product of a fresh study made in order to discover what "the facts themselves, critically weighed, appear to warrant."

Its significant but unfounded assumption was that Jesus had intended to found "the Society which is called by his name." The author succeeded in demonstrating to his own satisfaction that the new society was not to be a Davidic kingdom, but a family embracing all men, a "Christian Republic" governed by the laws of philanthropy, edification, mercy toward the repentant, resentment toward the perverse and oppressive, and forgiveness for all. The author's interest in the life and character of Jesus was only incidental to his study of the society Jesus was assumed to have founded. John is used only when it agrees with the Synoptics. Miracle is by no means denied, otherwise the whole would be mythical, but it is consistently minimized.

The book's characteristics were explained when its author became known. He was John Robert Seeley (1834-95), who in 1869 succeeded Charles Kingsley as regius professor of modern

history at Cambridge. As a historian of the school of Ranke he could hardly admit to the life of Jesus what he would exclude from other history. His chief interest was politics, the constitution of the state; therefore his attention to the founding and constitution of the church. The bitter objections of the orthodox to his treatment were due to the fact that, approaching the subject as a moralist and historian, he sought a rational, historical explanation of the life and permanent influence of Jesus.

The excitement which Renan caused in France and Seeley in England was paralleled by the "Schenkel case" in Germany. Daniel Schenkel (1813-85), after 1851 professor in Heidelberg and one of the most influential theologians in Germany, was not a rationalist, but a mediating theologian. His use of the results of Synoptic criticism in his *Charakterbild Jesu* (1864) puts him a generation ahead of his time. He denied the possibility of writing a biography of Jesus but strove to present a clear historical picture of his character and its development. Denying the historical trustworthiness of the fourth Gospel and, to a lesser degree, of the first and third, he made Mark the earliest and most accurate account. Schenkel insisted that Mark's account of Jesus' development was historical. He questioned many details of the Gospel accounts. Even Mark contained legendary material. Thus in principle he anticipated the "liberal" Jesus of the end of the century. However, what scandalized the conservatives was the fact that he did not speak of Jesus as God or as sinless but treated of him as a human being who developed like other men. Strauss, on the other hand, ridiculed Schenkel as a "halfer," because he did not reject very much more of the Gospel narratives. Schenkel's use of the fourth Gospel in places after his rejection of its historical value is open to question. His work may not have reached the highest standard. However, his emphasis on the priority of Mark as a historical source and the honest criticism

he employed entitle him to an honourable place in the development of the "liberal" portrait of Jesus. His importance for his own period is witnessed by the call for three editions of the book within a few months and for a fourth ten years later.

Karl Theodor Keim's *History of Jesus of Nazara*, "freely investigated in connection with the national life of Israel and related in detail" (1867-73, E. T., 1873-83), was one of the most attractive and successful of the liberal lives of Jesus. Alfred Edersheim called it the work of a "reverent negative critic," and noted "how widely it differs, not only from the superficial trivialities of a Renan, but from the stale arguments of Strauss or the picturesque inaccuracies of Hausrath." Keim (1825-78), professor at Zürich and later at Giessen, had been at Tübingen in Baur's best days. Since, like a good *Tübinger*, he made Matthew the earliest Gospel and rejected John, he attained a clearer picture than any one before him. He was a "negative critic" only in that he eliminated the miraculous and represented Jesus as truly a man, not a God temporarily assuming human form. He pictured the human development of Jesus within the historical framework of Jewish society. Early success, reaction and failure, flights, and a determination to die at Jerusalem form the outline of Jesus' ministry. Keim's assumption was that the modern world had so far progressed in its intellectual development that it could sincerely accept only an account of the life of Jesus which discovered his lofty historical worth and meaning in the potentialities which were the common possession of humanity.

Keim's *Jesus of Nazara* represents the highest achievement of the Tübingen school and of Hegelian philosophy in this field. Its source criticism was already antiquated by the Synoptic studies which had eventuated in H. J. Holtzmann's *Synoptic Gospels* and Weizsäcker's *Investigations*.⁴ Its philoso-

⁴See above, pp. 180-85.

phy of history was displaced by that of a new movement which began to exert an influence in Germany just after the publication of Keim's work, the school of Albrecht Ritschl of Göttingen. The gradual shift from conservatism to liberalism is exhibited in the "lives of Christ" by such famous scholars as Bernhard Weiss and Willibald Beyschlag. But they made no distinctive, original contribution in this field. The much-criticized "liberal" Jesus of the beginning of the twentieth century was essentially the product of Ritschlian theology plus Synoptic criticism. Its two outstanding leaders were Ritschl and Harnack.

IV. RITSCHLIANISM

Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) bears a magical name in the theological annals of the nineteenth century. The son of a Lutheran pastor who became the bishop, or general superintendent, of Pomerania, Ritschl began his university career in 1839 at Bonn, partly because of the attraction of Nitzsch with his attempt to combine science and religion. With faith in supernaturalism much shaken, Ritschl went to Halle to seek light from Tholuck and Julius Müller. But instead of finding satisfaction in the mediating school, he was drawn to Hegel and Baur. Having taken his doctorate at Berlin, he went eventually to Heidelberg to study under Richard Rothe, but, after only a semester, yielded to the greater attractions of Tübingen, where the new critical school was at the height of its influence under Baur, Schweigler, and Zeller. Within four months he had completed his three-hundred-page work on *The Gospel of Marcion and the Gospel of Luke* (1846), which made Marcion's Gospel the basis of Luke, instead of *vice versa*.

The following year, however, Ritschl "habilitated himself" in Bonn, and from that time on gradually departed from Baur as he had from the other existing schools, to establish a new school which was mediating, but in its own peculiar way. He

laboured for over twenty-five years before the first disciple acknowledged his leadership. Then no less a man than Wilhelm Herrmann, who had never studied under him, wrote, in January, 1875, to say that he had received his most decisive theological impressions from the reading of Ritschl's works. From that small and late beginning Ritschlianism made a phenomenal growth. At Göttingen, from 1864 until his death, Ritschl exercised an ever-growing influence. Adolf Harnack carried Ritschlianism to Leipzig in 1874, then to Giessen, to Marburg, and, in 1888, to Berlin. In 1878 Bernhard Stade reorganized the theological faculty at Giessen with men of Ritschlian leanings. Within a few years five extremely influential German theological or religious periodicals were founded by men who were more or less under Ritschl's influence.

Since, after his Tübingen period, Ritschl gave little attention to questions of Gospel or New Testament criticism, but was pre-eminently the theologian and historian of dogma, not many of the men who are commonly named as Ritschlians figure largely in this account, for they also were chiefly theologians, not historians or New Testament critics. Friedrich Loofs (1858-1928) may be mentioned for his Oberlin lectures, *What Is the Truth about Jesus Christ* (1913), Hans Hinrich Wendt (1853-1928) for numerous contributions, chiefly in the New Testament field, in critical studies, exegesis, ethics, and theology. The influence of Ritschl himself is chiefly indirect, but no less powerful for that.

To make his relation to Schleiermacher clear, Ritschl used to refer to a childhood experience. In 1831, his father received a visit from the famous Berlin preacher and professor. Ritschl's parents took the guest on a drive to a neighbouring town, and the ten-year-old shared the pleasure from a seat up by the coachman. Ritschl, who was not lacking in self-appreciation, saw in this a parable. From his place on the high coachman's seat he could see farther ahead than the great man behind him.

Wobbermin, the leading modern German exponent of Schleiermacher's theology, sees another parable in the incident. The person in the coachman's box, he says, sees farther straight ahead, but those behind in the open carriage have a wider and more comprehensive view.⁵ Certainly Schleiermacher was much more versatile in his abilities and much more universal in his thinking. Ritschl's influence was largely due to the narrow field within which he confined his interests and activities.

Ritschl was neither a philosopher nor a historian. His vociferous denunciation of metaphysics and his unhappy attempt to base religion on *Werturteile* ("value-judgments") are sufficient evidence on the first point. His biblical exegesis is equally decisive proof as to the second. In the critical use of the New Testament he was far behind many of his predecessors and contemporaries. He did not approach the Gospels in the spirit and according to the methods of Weizsäcker and H. J. Holtzmann. He was well aware of critical doubts and ostensibly accepted critical method, but he had the dogmatist's insensibility to critical principles, as a touch here and there reveals. For example, he remarks that John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me," "carries in itself the proof of its genuineness." He constantly quotes John along with the Synoptics, as if there were no historical difference and all were equally trustworthy records of Jesus' sayings.

For pietism and mysticism Ritschl had no sympathy, largely because he was strictly a moralist and theologian. His theology was "Christocentric," to use the word which is oftenest employed to characterize it. But that does not mean that it was centered in the historical Jesus. He claims, indeed, that "in the Christian view of the world a definite place is assigned to the historical founder" of the Christian religion. But he is actually concerned only with the problem of Jesus' relation to God

⁵Georg Wobbermin, *Schleiermacher und Ritschl* ("Gemeinverständliche Vorträge," 125), Tübingen: Mohr, 1927, pp. 3 f.

and to salvation. Jesus' person is "the abiding source of strength for all imitation of him." But no critical historical methods are employed to discover what kind of person Jesus was. Jesus brought the perfect revelation of God. He was the bearer of a perfect spiritual religion. He is to be imitated "because he made God's supreme purpose of the union of men in the kingdom of God the aim of his own personal life." Almost in Hegelian phraseology Ritschl describes Jesus' own fellowship with God as the symbol and prototype of the Christian's fellowship with God. Jesus' faithfulness to his divine calling is the supreme example which all must follow in faithfulness to their calling. However, Ritschl's interest was in the Christ of Paul and Luther rather than the Jesus back of the Synoptic Gospels.

Next to his idea of a Christocentric theology, Ritschl's revival of the Kantian allegorical interpretation of the kingdom of God has been perhaps his most influential idea. Ritschl admitted that Christ and his disciples, "following the Old Testament prophets," looked forward to the immediate fulfillment of their hope in the resurrection of the dead and the visible appearance of Christ himself. But this peculiar view was no longer held except in sectarian circles, and the fact that Jesus held it seems to have created no problem in his mind. The kingdom of God was the highest good, the ethical ideal. This conception of Christianity, as a spiritual religion with clear ethical ends to be attained gradually by a united community, suited exactly the evolutionary optimism of the close of the nineteenth century. It was not strange that Ritschlian theology had a tremendous vogue.

There was another element in Ritschlianism, however, which assisted it in gaining popularity. In spite of the looseness of Ritschl's historical and exegetical methods, partly because of it, he is to be credited with uniting historical criticism and theology. Revelation was not outside of history but within

it, and Christ was the center of it. For those who were less theological and more truly historical in their thinking this made the transition easy from dogmatics to the search for the historical Jesus. Thus the typical "liberal Jesus" was discovered and greeted with enthusiasm.

V. THE TYPICAL "LIBERAL" LIVES OF JESUS

The flower of nineteenth-century Synoptic criticism was a prosaic and academic accomplishment, Oskar Holtzmann's *Life of Jesus* (1901, E. T. 1904). As he egotistically proclaimed in his author's preface to the English translation, he had quite consistently spent nearly all of his labours on the one theme, Jesus and his times. The solidity of the work was monumental. Holtzmann's fundamental presupposition was that Jesus was not the supernatural Son of God, but a prophet and more than a prophet, greater than any other religious teacher. The unsurpassable ends of Jesus' life, so he insisted, will by God's grace eventually be attained in a salvation which will free mankind from its burden of sin. Following the criticism of his cousin, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, and of Carl Weizsäcker, he rejected John and assumed that the Marcan outline of Jesus' ministry was fully historical. Then, with no little skill, he wove the incidents and teachings of the other two Synoptics and the remnants of the Gospel of the Hebrews, also regarded as historical, into the Marcan framework. Moreover, as all writers on Jesus since Hess had tended to do, he read between the lines the motives of Jesus and the inner, pragmatic connections of events after the manner of the then-current psychological interpretation of biography and history.

One of the most audacious and successful of the many attempts to write a "liberal" life of Jesus was "The Manuscript" in Gustaf Frenssen's *Hilligenlei* (1905). The orthodox outcry against it and the fact that 200,000 copies of the novel besides many more thousands of "The Manuscript" by itself have been

printed go to prove its popularity. Frenssen was a country pastor whose literary successes finally led him to leave the pastorate. In *Hilligenlei*, a story of the struggle of pietism and ecclesiasticism with reality in a North Sea village of Schleswig-Holstein, the hero, Kai Jans, a brilliant boy from the poorest of homes, wins with bitter struggles an education culminating in the study of theology at Berlin. There he comes to feel the devastating force of the doubts raised by New Testament criticism and "liberal" theology. Eventually, in the midst of a bitter disappointment in love, he works out his religious and theological problems in "The Life of the Saviour, Portrayed According to German Research: the Basis of Germany's Rebirth."

In twenty-five thousand words he tells the story with something of the historical setting and with no little interpolated novelistic amplification and deft interpretation, but with the omission of many Gospel incidents and teachings. Little was made of the kingdom of God. The social element in Jesus' teachings was neither omitted nor emphasized. The eschatology of Jesus receives more adequate attention than in Harnack or Holtzmann. The portrait is clear, definite, and consistent. All of the miraculous is wanting except the healings, and they are the product of the popular faith and the power of will that shone in the eyes of the "young hero."

The shy, quiet, dreaming son of the carpenter Joseph and his wife Mary is deeply stirred by the misfortunes of his people and by the promises of the sacred books. Then, in the message of John the Baptist, he hears God's voice calling him to proclaim the coming reign of God. Eventually the call comes to mean that he is the messiah, and, after a Galilean ministry such as Mark narrates, when the opposition becomes serious, he journeys to Jerusalem, believing that, when he announces his mission there, either the Father in heaven will send his hosts to aid him at once or, if not, after his death

will come to him with ten thousand angels. This "loveliest of the sons of men" dies on the cross. But, ere long, his followers, now returned to Galilee, see him in visions and announce his resurrection. Later, as their recollections work over the days when he had been with them, they enlarge this or that incident until the Gospel narratives take their rise. It is a touching human story that does remarkable justice to the various historical items in the Gospel narrative. In such an honest, nonsupernaturalistic account of a life entirely devoted to God, Kai Jans—and doubtless Frenssen—saw a way of escape for preacher and layman from any impossible burden upon faith and from a hypocrisy that was destroying morality and religion in the people. It was an antidote to irreligion such as Drews sought in mythicizing Jesus.

VI. ADOLF HARNACK

Oskar Holtzmann's *Life of Jesus* may be called the typical, average product of nineteenth-century evolutionary liberalism, Frenssen's the artistic. But they were far from being the most influential. That accolade belongs to a book which appeared slightly earlier, Adolf Harnack's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), translated by Thomas Bailey Saunders as *What Is Christianity?* (1900). The book was delivered as a series of sixteen lectures to students of all faculties of the University of Berlin in the winter semester of 1899-1900. Six hundred hearers crowded Harnack's lecture room at seven o'clock in the morning—winter mornings, be it noted. An enthusiastic auditor made a stenographic record and at the conclusion of the course surprised the professor with a finished manuscript. Within three years 50,000 copies in German alone had been printed. It was quickly translated into English, French, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, and Russian. In ten years including translations one hundred thousand copies were sold.

One does not often hear the term, "Harnack school," but it has a very real entity in succession to Schleiermacher, Baur, and Ritschl. The two latter were not popular lecturers. They exerted their influence through individual students and solid books. It is said that at Bonn, Ritschl had a considerable number of students his first semester, only three or four the second, and none the third. Harnack, on the contrary, from the beginning of his academic career in 1874 as lecturer at Leipzig, drew about him a throng of enthusiastic young men. The solidity, learning, and interest of his published works established his reputation. It was never in doubt after the publication of his *History of Dogma* (1886-90, E.T., 1894-99). His interest centered in the ancient church up to the time of Augustine and in that period, particularly in the earlier part of it, lie his chief contributions. His *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (1902, 3d ed. 1915; E.T., 1904-5), his *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* (1893-1904) and his series of works on the Gospels and the Book of Acts, to mention only a few of his publications, were monuments of industry, insight, and critical judgment.

Harnack was a Livonian, the son of a professor of theology, and, on his mother's side, grandson of a professor of outstanding influence in the Baltic provinces. He was himself a man of attractive personality, the kind of natural aristocrat who never needs to impress his superiority upon others, but rather seeks to develop their sense of personal value. He was not an impractical dreamer or groping prophet dissatisfied with the present and dimly envisioning truth through uncertain mists, but a forward-striding pioneer, sure of himself and armed with the best weapons his age could produce.⁶ His organizing ability showed itself both in his scholarly and in his practical activities. As a church historian he ranks with Mommsen, the

⁶Erich Seeberg, *Adolf von Harnack* ("Gemeinverständliche Vorträge," 150), Tübingen: Mohr, 1930, pp. 11 f.

historian of Rome. Just as Schleiermacher, the great Berlin theologian, philosopher, and preacher of the early nineteenth century, embodied the best of his age, so Harnack, critic, church historian, and administrator embodies the spirit of the early twentieth century.

He differed from Schleiermacher and resembled Ritschl in his rejection of pietism and metaphysics. He differed from Ritschl and resembled Schleiermacher and still more Hegel and Baur in that he was emphatically a historian, not a dogmatist. His chief interest was to discover the kernel of Christianity. By following the parasitic growths of metaphysics, mysticism, and dogma which had attached themselves to the original stem, he believed it possible to single out the genuine and dependable elements and to combat degeneration. He differed from all four in his feeling for the concrete, in his understanding of actual life. History was not for Harnack an account of the revelation, or appearance, or emergence of the Spirit, or the idea, nor was it the psychologizing "discovery" of the motives and influence of individuals but, as with Dilthey, the evolution of living social groups. He combined the humanism of Erasmus, the rationalism of Lessing, the religious earnestness of Schleiermacher, and the moral seriousness of Ritschl.

As Troeltsch and Seeberg have pointed out, in the breadth of his world view "with its knowledge of the organic connection between spirit and nature and with its recognition of the spirit as against mechanistic natural science, he was a true disciple of Goethe, so much so that opponents have scornfully criticized his "Goethe Christianity."⁷ The methods and outlook of Ranke, Mommsen, and Lamprecht had entered into the fiber of his being. Yet the uncertainty and skepticism resulting from Dilthey's historicism had not affected him. In

⁷Seeberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 f.; Troeltsch in *Festgabe von Fachgenossen und Freunden A. von Harnack zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1921, pp. 285 f.

contrast to Ritschl, Harnack completely emancipated himself from any lingering supernaturalism and saw the history of Christianity as a part of world history, to be studied on the same principles as the history of any other religion. In contrast to the dialectical, speculative method of Baur, Harnack's was psychological and realistic.

However, his "Goethe Christianity" was no mere humanism. He did not lose God out of the world, when the supernatural became the natural. He summed up the message of Jesus under three heads: "first, the kingdom of God and its coming; second, God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul; third, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love." He recognized the inexplicable evil. But in the peace that passeth all understanding the Christian found a pledge that this dualism "will at last find its reconciliation in the great far-off event, the realized dominion of the Good."⁸

The naturalness of the Gospel as a product of evolution and above all as the goal which Protestantism had reached made it for him a perfectly trustworthy rudder, a norm which could be accepted without question. He simplified Christianity to the uttermost, to trust in God and brotherly love. Its convincing and saving power lay in the never-failing impression of the simple life-picture of Jesus. This simple "essence," then, was for him also the beginning, middle, and end of Christianity, indeed the completion of all true humanity.⁹ The temporary element in primitive Christianity, including its belief in miracles and its eschatology had to disappear, but that which remains is a sufficient foundation.

Harnack's account of Jesus and his teachings, as presented in *Das Wesen des Christentums* was bitterly criticized, first of all by conservative theologians in Germany, England, and elsewhere because it omitted from its account of Jesus' teach-

⁸*Das Wesen des Christentums*, 45 to 50 thousand, Leipzig, 1903, pp. 33, 95, E. T., pp. 55, 162.

⁹*Festgabe*, pp. 288 f.

ings Christian doctrines which theologians regarded as essentials, such as salvation from sin and a definite soteriology. Such criticism was to be expected, for Harnack did omit these doctrines as later, unwarranted accretions to the originally simple gospel of Jesus.

Much more disquieting was the charge that Harnack, the critical historian, had actually been guilty of uncritical modernization of Jesus. The most trenchant and pertinent criticism of Harnack's methods and conclusions was presented in Alfred Loisy's *l'Évangile et l'église* (1902), in English *The Gospel and the Church* (1903). Most unfortunately its earnest tones were drowned by the reverberations from the modernist controversy in France. Harnack did not—perhaps he could not in semipopular lectures—draw a distinct line between what he said as historical fact and what he presented as modernizing reinterpretation. His purpose was to show that certain Jewish elements and Greek interpretations, the apocalyptic eschatology and the miracles as well as Hellenistic mysticism and philosophy, were all nonessentials. He believed that his three points made room for a religion that was at once deeply spiritual and broadly social. His book was not a life of Jesus but an attempt to separate the contemporary from the permanent elements. In the preface to a reprinting in 1903 he insisted that such an undertaking was neither unhistorical nor inadmissible. To separate the essential and significant in a great historical occurrence from the contemporary husks is a purely historical task which is essential to historical understanding. That many original characteristics, even some which seemed and were essential, may have to be sacrificed is true, but the difficult task must be undertaken.

Loisy's criticism was conditioned by his Catholic training. Harnack, the Protestant, was under the antidogmatic influence of a back-to-the-beginning temper, of the drive toward re-pristination. As Loisy put it, Harnack regarded Christianity,

not as a seed that had grown, first a potential plant, then a real one, always identical from the beginning to the end of its evolution, but as a dried, or rather a rotten, fruit which must be peeled to reach its incorruptible kernel. Loisy charged Harnack with peeling so vigorously that practically nothing was left. Surely Harnack could have subscribed to the figure which Loisy used to describe his own conception of Christianity—the figure of the plant which maintains its identity in spite of its changes in appearance and which continues to realize itself more and more perfectly so long as it lives. One difference between the two was that Harnack regarded cult rites and beliefs which Loisy accepted, not as legitimate branches of the original plant, but as parasitic growths that were strangling it. When Loisy wrote in 1901 he was deeply concerned for the church. Harnack was much more concerned for the religious beliefs of his hundreds of youthful hearers.

On the other hand at one point Loisy was much truer to historical fact than Harnack; that was in regard to the eschatology of Jesus. Harnack admitted that Jesus, like his contemporaries, believed realistically in the sharp contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, that there was to be a dramatic conflict between the two, and that after the victory he and his disciples would sit in judgment over the twelve tribes of Israel. But Harnack refused to follow those who made these brilliant colours and hard contrasts the distinctive elements in Jesus' preaching. He argued that it was usually held to be a mistake to judge pre-eminent, epoch-making characters by what they shared with their contemporaries; it was wrong to try to lower them to the common level. These generally accepted views of first-century Judaism were not the characteristic thing in Jesus, but rather his conception of the kingdom of God as an inner, spiritual power.

Harnack's premise must be accepted as technically correct, but not his conclusion. Actually Loisy was, historically speak-

ing, nearer the truth in emphasizing the eschatological rather than the spiritual character of the idea of the kingdom of God. Jesus' use of the current conception was not, indeed, the new and original element in his gospel, but it was so much more significant in the beginning than Harnack allowed that he actually did lay himself fully open to the charge of unhistorical, anachronistic modernization.

VII. THE END OF AN ERA

Holtzmann's *Leben Jesu* and Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums* mark the end of an era. The first half of the nineteenth century had been largely preoccupied with the problem of the miracles. The second half gave itself to the literary study of the sources and their mutual relations, with the supposed outcome of discovering in Mark a trustworthy source which could stand the tests of historical criticism. Holtzmann and Harnack interpreted this document so as to picture the "liberal Jesus," who suited the temper of cultured gentlemen in a scientific age. He was no mere sentimental humanitarian, à la Renan, but a prophet of social righteousness who was fit to lead humanity on an optimistic, evolutionary quest for the best.

In the same year as Holtzmann's work appeared two others which, from opposite directions but with equal vigor and warmth, disputed the accuracy of the critical-liberal portrait of Jesus. Wrede's *The Messianic Secret* insisted that Mark was not a historical source but a construction of the imagination centering round the belief of the church in Jesus' messiahship, a belief which he himself had never harboured. Schweitzer's *Mystery of the Kingdom of God* insisted that the only alternative to Wrede's skepticism was to make the messiahship—and that in the sheerest and most unattractive miraculous and catastrophic sense—the very center of Jesus' thought and action. Schweitzer's *From Reimarus to Wrede, the History of*

the Life-of-Jesus Research (1906), or, in English, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910), enforced his point of view with vigor and learning. Germany, already familiar with the idea and long immunized to such one-sided logic, was not greatly moved. In England and America, where liberals were pinning their faith to a social gospel, the reverberations were alarming. Father George Tyrrell, already torn by his inner and outer conflicts, found the arguments of his friend, Alfred Loisy, in *l'Évangile et l'église* unanswerable. Father Tyrrell's *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (1909), published after his brutal excommunication and tragic death, shows their devastating effect upon a sensitive and ardent spirit. Of Harnack's and Holtzmann's "liberal Jesus," the high-souled teacher of morality who sought to establish the spiritual reign of God in men's hearts and thus induce a reign of justice on earth and who died a martyr to his lofty mission, not a shred was left. The nineteenth-century Jesus was tried and found wanting. He was only "period furniture." It seemed that the "liberal Jesus" and the "social gospel" which the nineteenth century had produced and which reached the height of their influence in the first decade of the twentieth were consumed on the same funeral pyre by the ardent heats of eschatological hopes and fears. The story of the rise of these two problems and their mutual relations belongs to the following chapters.

CHAPTER XIII

THE JESUS OF THE CLOUDS ATTEMPTS TO READ THE MIND OF JESUS

I. AN INESCAPABLE PROBLEM

TO THOSE who had been reposing on the comfortable cushions of conservative complacency or who had been preening themselves on the progressive achievements of the critical search for the historical Jesus, the eschatological controversy and the destruction of the liberal portrait of Jesus came like the crack of doom. Especially in England and America disillusionment was profound. As the nineteenth century neared its end, doubts as to the eventful success of current historical criticism in disengaging Jesus from the mistaken ideas of his contemporaries and reporters had become more and more insistent, almost keeping step with the "liberal" portrait as it grew in definiteness under current retouchings. Above all, the problem of Jesus' messiahship, of his own attitude toward the messiahship, and of his conception of his mission became more and more troublesome and significant. Jesus' self-consciousness was the fashionable subject among theologians.

The one fundamental problem is, What did Jesus do for the world during his short life and shorter ministry? That problem, however, had to be analyzed. Before it could be answered,

there was another which must be faced: What did Jesus undertake to do? Before one can face the question, "What think ye of Christ?" one must answer the question, What did Jesus think of himself?

The man who deserves the credit for clearly formulating the problem as to Jesus' conception of his mission is Johannes Weiss, famous son of a famous father, Bernhard Weiss, both notable in the New Testament field. In France Alfred Loisy, in his *l'Évangile et l'église*, made the character of Jesus' eschatology perfectly clear, but his Catholic connections and the acrid dust of the modernist controversy, with which his "little red book" was concerned, prevented the world from discovering the value of his contribution. The man who made the English-speaking world conscious of the problem was the Alsatian preacher's son, Albert Schweitzer, now known the world over as organist, theologian, medical missionary, lecturer, and philosopher.

II. ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Schweitzer belongs to another age than ours, an age of giants; to an age of genius like that when Herder, Lessing, and Kant, or Schiller, Goethe, and Hegel gave Germany a never-to-be-forgotten glory. The historians of some future age will speak of the "Schweitzer myth" and conclude that there must have been several men of that name to do what he has done, just as several Sargons were fused in the ancient legend. Beginning at the age of twenty-four, he has written important volumes on Kant, on Bach, on organ building, and, recently, on philosophy and the history of religions. In 1901 he published two brief but scholarly and original works on the life of Jesus. His *From Reimarus to Wrede* (1906) was an astonishing accomplishment for a man who was constantly in demand for Bach concerts on the organ, was assistant preacher in a Strasbourg church, and was lecturer on the New Testament in the

theological faculty of the University. Through William Sanday at Oxford and F. Crawford Burkitt at Cambridge this book became known to the English and American public. It made more of a sensation in the English-speaking world (under the title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910) than it did in Germany, largely because the latter country was better prepared for it. It was followed in 1911 by the *History of the Study of Paul from the Reformation to the Present*, put into English in 1912 as *Paul and His Interpreters*. In these two works, especially the one on the life of Jesus, he stated the theory of "thoroughgoing eschatology" with all possible sharpness.

Then suddenly it was learned that Schweitzer had renounced, so it appeared, all his fame and future as musician, philosopher, and theologian to take a medical course, secure an M.D. degree, and go in 1913 to the French Congo as a medical missionary to establish a hospital for the negroes of the jungle, to engage in "practical eschatology," as he put it. Before he left, he brought his work on the life of Jesus up to date in the second edition of his *History of the Life-of-Jesus Research* (1913) and, as his thesis for his medical degree, wrote *The Psychiatric Estimate of Jesus* (1913). Reduced to ill-health and beggary by the War and incarceration in a concentration camp, he returned to Europe after the peace to collect funds by means of writing, lecturing, and organ concerts and thus rehabilitated his medical mission.

One can appreciate Schweitzer's volume on the *Quest of the Historical Jesus* only if one puts back of it the pictures which the author has himself drawn of his childhood and youth. As a boy, he was haunted for weeks by the recollection of a limping horse dragged by a man in front and beaten by another from behind toward a slaughterhouse. As a youth of sixteen, he could not study for days after hearing *Tannhäuser* for the first time. As a young recruit in 1894, doing his

year of military service with his Greek New Testament in his haversack, on a day of rest in the village of Gugenheim, he discovered, as he read, that what Jesus had said did not agree with the interpretations of his revered teacher, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, and he returned to the university, when his service was over, to work out a new theory of the life and mission of Jesus. One sees the student's room in the Thomasstift at Strasbourg looking out upon a quiet garden with great trees, and on the floor all the books on the life of Jesus in the Strasbourg library arranged in piles according to the chapters which were later to appear. One would not forget the harassed Swabian housekeeper who tried to sweep between the piles. Neither should one forget that Schweitzer thought the library so well stocked, through inheritance from the libraries of Eduard Reuss and other professors, that apparently he sought for no more than it provided.

One could hardly ask for more, for, with one or two very important exceptions, Schweitzer has missed almost nothing on the life of Jesus which is worth noting. What here follows is largely a review and criticism of his work, a criticism because that work, complete and valuable though it is as a survey of the literature of a century and a quarter on the subject, is dominated, particularly in the first edition, by the one idea, that Jesus was a consistent eschatologist. To Schweitzer this meant that Jesus expected the coming of an otherworldly and supernatural kingdom of God in the near future. During his ministry he was preparing to become its messiah and was calling upon men to prepare to be members of it. Men could do nothing to bring it in or to hasten its coming. They could only wait upon God's will. Jesus' ethical and religious ideas were so dominated by this expectation that his ethics are a purely interim matter with no real meaning or value for modern civilization.

This conception of the kingdom Schweitzer had propounded

in his *Secret of the Messiahship and Suffering, a Sketch of the Life of Jesus*, published in 1901 without attracting attention, and translated into English in 1914, when his *Quest* had brought him fame, as *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. In his original account of *Research in the Life of Jesus*, he followed especially one thread, which he found to begin with Reimarus in the strife-provoking Wolfenbüttel Fragments which Lessing published: What was the aim of Jesus' ministry? The basic criticism of Schweitzer's brilliant work is this: As he takes up one after another of the more than seven hundred modern authors whom he mentions, he insensibly changes the central question to a peripheral one: What was this author's attitude toward "consistent eschatology"?

III. THE EPIC OF THE QUEST

The first edition of *From Reimarus to Wrede*, or *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, was a fascinating drama built up to a powerful climax. Beginning with the impossible theory of Reimarus that Jesus was covertly a revolutionary whose secret was revealed by his violent cleansing of the Temple, that this led to his arrest and execution, and that the church was founded on a resurrection fraudulently simulated by the disciples, Schweitzer traced the gradual unfolding of modern critical-historical views.

He described the dry-as-dust, naïvely serious rationalists reading their impossible eighteenth-century science back into the miracle tales of the first century. He passed before his readers' eyes the novelists, Bahrdt, Venturini, and their *epigoni*, who view the life of Jesus through a purple mist of romance. The Straussian controversy was given the abundant attention demanded by the excitement it created and the efforts it stimulated. The slow development of scientific literary criticism was portrayed, with the resulting rejection of the fourth Gospel and the acceptance of Mark's priority and of

the two-document theory of Synoptic relationships. Then followed the account of the growing skepticism which whittled the records down to suit its own meager, nineteenth-century conception of what a first-century Jewish theological professor or progressive preacher would do and teach.

In opposition to this incontinent modernizing of Jesus, growing familiarity with Jewish apocalyptic literature showed two things, that the language of the Gospels was nothing strange or unusual, but had innumerable parallels in contemporary documents, and that, if it were interpreted in the light of contemporary usage, Jesus was inescapably marked as a Jewish apocalypticist. Hence arose the conflict over eschatology, which, like an inextinguishable fire in a deep-lying coal field, has alternately smoldered and blazed for seventy-five years. It reached its climax thirty years ago. The last volume published by Rudolf Otto, to be discussed in a moment, brought it to the fore again.

Herder in his *Philosophy of History* was one of the first to state clearly and definitely the eschatological character of Jesus' teaching, just as his keen eye also saw intuitively that Mark was the first of the written Gospels. He emphasized the effects of the vivid apocalyptic expectations of the people on the reception of Jesus' message. Unfortunately, knowledge of Jewish literature was too slight for Herder's genial intuition to be confirmed by study of the available sources. Nearly a century later there were scholars who, on the basis of rabbinic literature, argued that the Christian documents were entirely unhistorical in representing messianism as a live, popular question in Jesus' day.

Increasing knowledge of the Jewish apocalypses eventually swept this unwarranted skepticism away, and then, with the development of literary criticism, the problem of the authenticity and meaning of the apocalyptic language which the Gospels ascribe to Jesus became at length the most troublesome of

all. As Wellhausen has said, among the problems of the life of Jesus "the most important is whether and in what sense he himself held himself to be the messiah and presented himself as such."¹

Solutions proposed for the problem have been too numerous to mention. A whole library of scientific and popular works has gathered around it. There was a time just before and after 1900 when every German *Neutestamentler* had to discuss the "messianic consciousness" of Jesus and this topic almost drove every other from the field. Omitting chiliastic, allegorical, and spiritualizing interpretations as unworthy of scientific discussion, one may say that in general the treatments have taken four directions: (1) thoroughgoing denial (Wrede), (2) thoroughgoing affirmation of transcendent eschatology (Schweitzer, Warschauer, Burkitt), (3) a mediating concept, radical in one direction, a compromise in the other, which presents Jesus as a preacher of the coming kingdom but not himself a messianic claimant (Case), and (4) thoroughgoing apocalypticism which defines Jesus' eschatology in a different way from Schweitzer (Von Dobschütz, McCown, Otto).

IV. THOROUGHGOING DENIAL OF APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY

In circles which were at all in touch with the developing scientific thought of the nineteenth century, the view that Jesus thought of himself as a messiah who should literally return on the clouds of heaven seemed impossible. If for no other reason, reaction against the excesses of pietistic chiliasm, such as the great theologian, Bengel, had fostered in Würtemberg and the uneducated farmer, William Miller, had excited in America, drove the "modern" exegete to seek for some way out which would rescue Jesus from such unworthy associates.

One example of this tendency is the brilliant but unfortu-

¹*Einleitung*, p. 79. See above, pp. 140 ff.

nate Strasbourg professor and preacher, Timothée Colani, whose future was ruined in 1870 by the German capture of the city and university. In 1864 he received his degree of doctor of theology for a thesis which defended the idea that the term "Son of man" had no messianic connotation.² Jesus created the phrase, so he maintained, to point to himself as "at the same time a poor child of Adam and also an object of divine favour." He was to be a suffering messiah and also a Savior. In contrast to Renan, who had just captured the world with his picture of Jesus accepting the messianic rôle from his friends and playing it like a good actor, Colani held that for Jesus the kingdom of God was "an exclusively spiritual power and his office was an exclusively moral mission." Whatever points to an actual visible return of Jesus is unauthentic. Thus, by reinterpretation of the pertinent phrases and a major operation on the text, Colani saved Jesus' sanity. The disciples had misunderstood Jesus and had misrepresented his meaning. Colani could claim excellent company in adopting this conclusion, for it was shared by Schleiermacher, Baur, Hase, Bleek, Holtzmann, Schenkel, Meyer, and Volckmar. Up to the eighties it could still be maintained that the highly developed eschatology of Enoch was unknown in Jesus' day, and this was a strong argument for denying it to Jesus.

Thirty years later, by a different route, a similar conclusion, so far as concerns the term "Son of man," was reached by Hans Lietzmann, since 1924, after twenty years at Jena, professor of church history at Berlin. His maiden publication, which won a prize suggested by Wellhausen, was on the theme, *Der Menschensohn* (1896). He maintained that the Greek phrase in the Gospels, literally "the son of the man," had no Aramaic equivalent and therefore could have appeared in Christian usage only after Jesus' death and in Greek. *Bar-nasha*, the near-

²*Jésus-Christ et les croyances messianiques de son temps*. 1st and 2d eds., Strasbourg, 1864.

est Aramaic equivalent means merely "a man." Arnold Meyer, Wellhausen, with many other German scholars, and, in America, Professor Nathaniel Schmidt of Cornell University, Dean Emeritus Shirley Jackson Case of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, and the late Professor Carl S. Patton of Pacific School of Religion may be mentioned as among those who have argued that Jesus never called himself "Son of man."

In a general way, this argument regarding the term "Son of man" complemented and supported the spiritualizing interpretation of the kingdom of God which had long been accepted by the church at large and had the support of such great names as Kant, Schleiermacher, and Ritschl. In the background was the unconscious conservative assumption which produced the "liberal" Jesus, that Jesus must have been "over the heads of his reporters" and indeed must not only have been as wise as moderns, but must also have shared their scientific and philosophical concepts.

The argument against ascribing to Jesus a messianic self-consciousness received its sharpest formulation from Wilhelm Wrede in 1901 in his *Messianic Secret in the Gospels*. Wrede (1859-1907), a Hannoverian, for the last eleven years of his life professor in Breslau, was a brilliant, original, and over-emphatic scholar, inclined to ride an idea to death. Possibly the fact that he had long lived in daily anticipation of the heart attack which eventually cut his life too short gave his judgment an unusual black-and-white sharpness. Yet in this regard, as in many of his conclusions, Schweitzer was much like him. Wrede acknowledged his intellectual heritage as coming from Bruno Bauer, Gustav Volckmar, and the Dutch scholar, Hoeckstra. As in his theory that Paul made an entirely new religion out of the religion of Jesus, so in his theory of Mark's use of the "messianic secret," he went beyond the evidence.

As to the Gospels, he maintained the thesis that Jesus had neither called himself the messiah nor been known as such. After his death, when his disciples became convinced that he was the messiah, they explained his failure to make his mission known on the grounds that for reasons of policy, he had kept the claim a secret from all but his most intimate disciples. Once granted the assumption that Jesus did not regard himself as the messiah, this explanation of his commands to silence regarding his messiahship and of the disciples' stupid misunderstanding seems so clear and cogent that the theory acquires great plausibility.

V. THOROUGHGOING ESCHATOLOGY

Unfortunately for these arguments in support of a "liberal," moral and spiritual interpretation of Jesus' mission, Aramaic studies and, above all, the newly recovered and studied Jewish apocalypses were bringing to light a mass of material which favoured the opposite interpretation. Wilhelm Weiffenbach in 1873 failed to discover grounds for completely eliminating all apocalyptic eschatology from Jesus' teaching, but he completely emasculated it. Then came Schürer and Baldensperger with the evidence that the Similitudes of Enoch were products of the century before Jesus. Still Baldensperger could ascribe to Jesus a spiritual as well as realistic and miraculous idea of the coming of the kingdom.

It remained for Johannes Weiss to write a discussion of the subject, *Jesus' Preaching of the Kingdom of God* (1892), which was after Schweitzer's own heart.³ Weiss set up a great "either-or," either eschatological or noneschatological, and he decided for the former. The kingdom was neither political nor spiritual. No one founded it, no one could spread it. Jesus' conception of the kingdom and of his messiahship was purely tran-

³*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*. Göttingen, 1892, 67 pp.; 2d ed., 1900, 214 pp.

scendent and apocalyptic. His rôle was essentially passive; he must wait for God to send the kingdom. Only in acceptance of his sufferings did he take steps to hasten its coming.

The next important attack upon the subject, the first to approach it with full competence on the philological side, was that made by Gustaf Dalman.⁴ In his *Words of Jesus*, among many interesting discussions, he showed that "kingdom of heaven" was merely a periphrasis for "kingdom of God" and had no other-worldly connotation whatever. *Bar-nasha* he believed to be a perfectly valid Aramaic phrase which Jesus could have borrowed from Daniel and used in a messianic sense. Even though, for the writer of Daniel, this celestial figure is only the guardian angel of Israel, Jesus' use of the term is best explained in the light of the apparent promise of the Book of Daniel that the victorious kingdom of God is to come to and through "one like unto a son of man." Dalman never undertook to construct any theory regarding Jesus' self-consciousness nor to draw any final conclusions regarding the interpretation of his messiahship. But, though he was far from suggesting the one-sided conclusions of Weiss, he decidedly approved the theory that Jesus had some kind of messianic self-consciousness.

In numerous sayings of Jesus the strange combination of the Son of man who comes on the clouds of heaven to conquer, rule, and judge with a Son of man who anticipates suffering and death has been found quite inexplicable, except as a *post-eventum* rationalization. Hugo Gressmann, in his monumental collection of materials for the interpretation of Jesus' messianic ideas, first called the *Origin of the Israelite-Jewish Eschatology* (1905), then revised and published after his death as *The Messiah* (1929), had no difficulty in regarding the "Servant of Yahweh" passages as messianic, but he had to suppose that the combination of the two ideas, the messiah

⁴See above, p. 136.

and suffering servant, took place only after Jesus' death. Now Gerhard Kittel of Tübingen, New Testament son of an Old Testament father, has pointed out, in a brief but comprehensive article on "the Son of man" in that indispensable German encyclopedia, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1929), that Fourth Ezra and especially Enoch repeatedly echo language of Second Isaiah regarding the "Servant of Yahweh," the "Righteous One," and the "Elect One." They do not represent the messiah as suffering, but they do provide a basis for this new and revolutionary feature which, according to the Gospels, Jesus added to the character of the messiah.

An entirely new phase of the problem has come to the fore within the last two decades. Studies into the relations of Christianity and Hellenistic-oriental cults carried on by Richard Reitzenstein, since 1914 professor of classical philology in Göttingen, have shown, among other things, that there was a widespread myth of a Proto-Man (*Urmensch*), a "first Adam," a heavenly figure somewhat like the Son of man in Enoch. Professor Carl H. Kraeling, B. W. Bacon's successor at Yale Divinity School, in his *Anthropos and Son of Man* (1927), has followed the idea into many of its wide ramifications. He shows that, at present, it cannot be traced back to a time earlier than about 100 A.D., except for Paul's probable reference to it, but it is possibly much earlier. Professor Rudolf Otto denies the derivation from the myth of Proto-Man and thinks that the Iranian idea of the *fravashi*, or heavenly double of a man, is the likely parallel. There can be no doubt that some such idea exercised great influence on early Christian speculation regarding Jesus and possibly the Proto-Man idea was already at work in pre-Christian Judaism. However, at present final conclusions are impossible.

This excursion into the miry fields of debate over details of philological and literary criticism will serve to illustrate the nature of the problems involved. It shows how difficult deci-

sion is when data are lacking and how prone scholars are to wish to know more than it is possible to know. Yet it shows also that, while scholars too seldom change their minds after they have published an opinion, still progress is made at least from generation to generation. Some questions are settled, even though youthful scholars in their ignorance of the work of the past do not know it and old scholars refuse to acknowledge it.

As to the meaning of the phrase, Son of man, in the Gospels there can be no doubt in view of its use in Daniel and Enoch. The one important question at issue is whether Jesus used the term of himself and, if so, how the idea affected and expressed his conception of the world and of his mission. This is the question which must be studied from every angle, philological, literary, and historical. This was the question to which Schweitzer thought to give a final solution with his dilemma, thoroughgoing eschatology or thoroughgoing skepticism.

VI. SCHWEITZER'S CONSISTENTLY TRANSCENDENT ESCHATOLOGY

Schweitzer's epic reached its dramatic climax in 1901 when, on the same day, his own *Sketch of the Life of Jesus: the Secret of the Messiahship and Suffering* and Wilhelm Wrede's *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels* were published. Schweitzer was delighted to discover that, in many points, Wrede's criticisms of the liberal Marcan Jesus corresponded with his own, although the two proceeded from absolutely different points of view.

Schweitzer criticizes especially two features of the "modern historical" method: first, the constant tendency to read between the lines of the Gospels complex motives, connections, tendencies, and developments which are not given in the sources, and, second, the claim to ability to separate the true from the false, to extract the "historical kernel." He agrees with Wrede that all investigators, however different their results, unite in "subtracting and reinterpreting." Each retains that part of the tradi-

tion which fits his construction of the facts and then rejects the remainder. But Wrede did the same, for he pared away the idea of the messiahship and all that was tainted with it. Schweitzer, on the contrary, loudly claims—and with some justice—that he keeps the Gospels intact. His theory does not require the elimination of great blocks of the material, but builds a structure which includes them as integral parts of the whole. Close inspection, indeed, reveals the fact that all does not fit. Schweitzer also rejects some materials, rearranges others, and reinterprets not a little.

His theory, however, does have the virtue of self-consistency and historical fitness. Jesus goes out to preach the immediate coming of a supernatural and miraculous kingdom of God, urging men to repent and keep themselves from sin in view of its imminent approach. He sends out the Twelve to preach it widely, expecting it to appear before their return. When they come back before his expectation is realized, he concludes that, before the kingdom can come, he must go to Jerusalem and fulfill prophecy by taking upon himself the last messianic woes. His final journey to Jerusalem, the Triumphal Entry, and his other actions during the Passion Week are guided by the effort to fulfill prophecy by bringing about his own death. Jesus had kept his messianic claim a secret until the Transfiguration. Then the three learn of it. To Jesus' dismay, Peter's confession, which, according to Schweitzer, follows instead of preceding the Transfiguration, discloses it to the Twelve. This is the secret, then, which Judas reveals to the Jewish authorities to give them a legal basis for Jesus' arrest, conviction, and execution.

According to Schweitzer, the whole ministry and teaching of Jesus are so completely dominated by this eschatological expectation that he offers only an interim morality, intended to guide his disciples through the perilous last days and to prepare them for the new age, the coming of which they can neither

hasten nor retard. His ethical teaching, therefore, is no norm for the modern Christian. The outcome of the quest for the historical Jesus is the discovery that "the Jesus of Nazareth who appeared as the messiah, proclaimed the morality of the kingdom of God, founded the kingdom of heaven on earth, and died in order to consecrate his work never existed." The late Jewish metaphysics in which he clothed his ideas makes it difficult to translate them into our language. Indeed, the task is impossible so long as we attempt merely to separate the permanent from the temporary in his words. All that he said is too deeply coloured. He is "not an authority for our intelligence."

Yet Schweitzer abandoned all and went to Africa because of the authority of Jesus, not for the intelligence, but for the will. For him, Christianity is a matter of mystical understanding from will to will, which transmits immediately the essentials of Jesus' *Weltanschauung*.

A religion exhibits just so much understanding of the historical Jesus (says Schweitzer) as it possesses a strong and passionate faith in the kingdom of God. . . . As one unknown and nameless (Jesus) comes to us as he walked by the shore of the sea up to those men who did not know who he was. He says the same word, "Follow me," and he sets before us the tasks which he must accomplish in our times. He commands. And to those who listen to him, wise and unwise, he will reveal himself in the peace, the labor, the conflicts, the suffering which they may experience in his company, and as an inexpressible mystery they will learn who he is.⁵

VII. THE LOGIC OF THOROUGHGOING ESCHATOLOGY

Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* rendered a service which places him in a class by himself. He did what Johannes Weiss, Hans Lietzmann, Julius Wellhausen, Heinrich Holtz-

⁵*Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, pp. 638, 642.

mann, Wilhelm Bousset, Alfred Loisy, and the whole galaxy of New Testament stars had not succeeded in doing. He made the eschatology of Jesus a subject of general discussion. He proclaimed to the world what Weiss and others had already proved, that Jesus must be understood eschatologically, that he was an ancient apocalyptist, not a modern social reformer. He demolished forever the Kantian-Ritschlian and the Hegelian-Marxian interpretation of Jesus. But he was far from saying the last word. In the English-speaking world his views were more vigorously debated than in Germany. The Christ-myth theory, the War, and, since the War, form criticism, the theology of crisis, and Naziism have usurped attention there. But as already has become plain, the question is not settled.

Elsewhere the weaknesses of Schweitzer's theory and his arguments in its support have been sufficiently exhibited.⁶ His semi-Hegelian conception of the historical process is entirely wrong. Ideas do not always annul themselves when they are consistently carried through. Progress toward the truth is not made by the conflict between two (often confusedly opposed) alternatives, such as supernatural or rational, mythical or historical, eschatological or noneschatological. His whole argument is based upon the "either-or fallacy," the "fallacy of antithesis," or "abstraction," or "misplaced concreteness." His own theory may be demolished by the same specious, illogical arguments by which he disproves others.

Schweitzer's knowledge of the facts is as inadequate as his logic. The ignorance which the eighteenth-century rationalists exhibit regarding psychology and the history of religions, Strauss's defective conceptions of myth-making, the naïve modernity of the "liberal" picture of Jesus—all find an admirable parallel in Schweitzer's idea that first-century Jewish eschatology was thoroughly transcendent. Nathaniel Messel was equally

⁶See the article, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," in *JR*, XVI (1936), 30-46, here used, by permission of the editor, in a much abbreviated and altered form.

mistaken when he attempted to prove that Jewish eschatology was exclusively materialistic and political.⁷ Such thoroughgoing, *konsequent* hypotheses are almost always wrong.

VIII. OTTO'S RELIGIO-HISTORICAL APPROACH

The most vigorous and successful attack upon the historical side of the problem which has recently been made is that of the late Professor Rudolf Otto in his *Kingdom of God and Son of Man, a Religio-Historical Essay* (1934, E. T., 1938). As the subtitle indicates, the book, as every such work should, makes its approach from the side of the history of religions. No study of the ideas of Jesus and the early Christians can do anything else. Three thousand years of history and many more thousands of years which have left no written records of the flooding stream of human experience had poured their fullness into the society which gave birth to Jesus and the Christian movement. In a sense which the author of Acts did not comprehend, "these things were not done in a corner." Few men have approached the problem with larger resources of knowledge in the religio-historical field than Otto.

One of his chief contributions was to reinforce the generally accepted opinion that Judaism, especially in its eschatology, had been deeply affected by Parsism and to show how Christian views are explained by their ultimate derivation from that source. Another contribution was his exposure of the rationalizing speculations and modernizations of Ritschlianism and the unhistorical medievalism of Barthianism. The kingdom was not God's presence in the heart. It does not emphasize "decision" but repentance. It is not an allegory for a "radical demand," but a goal for men to seek.

Schweitzer's consistent eschatology is equally far from discovering the essential character of the facts. The kingdom was

⁷*Die Einheitlichkeit der jüdischen Eschatologie* ("Beiheft zur Zeitschr. f. d. Alttest. Wiss.," 30), Giessen, 1915.

future but at work in the present. Therefore it is a pure *mirum*, a miraculous thing (*Wunderding*), a *mysterium*. All eschatological thinking, Otto insisted, is essentially irrational, whether found in Zarathustra, Mohammed, Saint Francis, or Luther. It lives at the same time in the present and the future. For Jesus it was essentially supernatural, neither a place nor a state, but a spiritual power, as B. W. Bacon had argued.⁸ It must be remembered that the Hebrew-Aramaic phrase means the "reign of God." It was at least partially hypostatized. It was not the work of men, but of God; something given, something that came entirely of itself. For Jesus, according to Otto, there were three "aeons," (1) that of the prophets and of John, (2) his own present time, in which the kingdom had already dawned as a saving power, and (3) the future, when it would come in full glory. The Gospel passages which describe the rule of God as a present active power were already suffering amputation and suppression in the early church, which is the strongest possible evidence for their genuineness. Jesus exhibited a strange, inconsistent, double attitude, a living feeling for the immediate breaking-in of the otherworldly future, and also a conception of religion and morality which reckoned on an undisturbed ongoing of the world. His eschatology, therefore, was not sufficiently consistent to affect his ethics. The command to love God and one's neighbour was not true merely because the kingdom was coming. Thus Otto rejected the idea of interim ethics.

Jesus' essential characteristics were to be discovered in that in which he differed from his predecessors, especially from John the Baptist. Otto agreed with Maurice Goguel that Jesus differed decidedly from John. The Baptist proclaimed, "The judgment of wrath is coming; repent." Jesus preached, "The kingdom of God is coming; repent and believe the good

⁸Reich Gottes, pp. 56 f., E. T., p. 74, referring to Bacon, *The Story of Jesus and the Beginnings of the Church*, New York and London: Century Co., 1929, pp. 212 f.

news." He adopted John's message, but he transformed it, for instead of the day of Yahweh, he proclaimed the reign of God. So also he adopted the current idea of that reign as beginning after the "messianic woes and divine judgment," but it was already present and working in its miraculous powers, and, through his teaching and charismatic powers, he was able to bring his followers into contact with "this miracle of the transcendent."

As to the problem of the messianic self-consciousness of Jesus, Otto adopted the only approach which gives an intelligible solution, that which starts from Jesus' consciousness of mission (*Sendungsbewusstsein*). He used two lines of argument. The messianic faith of the community found its sufficient cause in the messianic claims of him about whom and through whom the community was assembled. His messianic claims are historical because they are consistent with the total basic idea and correspond to suitable previously existing concepts. In the historical background, with its apocalypses, especially Enoch, and its Iranian mythology of the end on the one hand, and with the Suffering Servant idea of the Old Testament on the other, Otto found a sufficient justification for Jesus' conception of his mission. Given unquestioning faith in God's power, Jesus' high sense of mission would easily clothe itself in the messianic idea, not in its political form, but by assuming as its ideal Enoch, the preacher of righteousness who eventually (chaps. 70 ff.) himself becomes the Son of man and is exalted to heaven.

With the Enochic picture of the Son of man, according to Otto, Jesus combined the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. It was not that Jesus must suffer, but that the Son of man must suffer in order that the long-awaited salvation might come. Such a combination of the glorious figure of the Enochic Son of man and the bruised and beaten Sufferer of Isaiah 53, so Otto argues, was too astounding to be the work of the early

Christian community. Only an original spirit like Jesus could have thought of it. Why Jesus should have believed that the messiah must suffer, Otto explains out of a complex of sacrificial ideas. While such notions may have played a part in Jesus' thinking, Schweitzer's explanation that Jesus thought of himself as suffering the woes of the last days instead of, and on behalf of, "many" deserves an equal claim to consideration.

The third section of Professor Otto's book adds another link to his demonstration by discussing "the Last Supper as a Consecration of the Disciples for the Coming of the Kingdom of God." The meal was a promise that they should eat and drink together in the coming kingdom. Walter Rauschenbusch, using language that is too modern, made the rite of baptism originally "an act of dedication to a religious and social movement."⁹ Strangely enough, he did not use and reinterpret the idea which has often been suggested and which Otto has now argued at length and convincingly as to the eschatological significance of the Last Supper. Both ideas belong to the total concept.

It must be admitted that the pictures which both Schweitzer and Otto draw of Jesus make large drafts on the prosaic Western imagination. The Occidental who would understand Jesus must put himself into a completely different atmosphere from that which Jeans, Eddington, Millikan, and Whitehead breathe, into the atmosphere of the *Arabian Nights*, Ahikar, and the apocalypses. In that atmosphere the rugged inexplicability of Jesus' messianic claims melts into intelligibility as, in the distance, pastel shades soften the roughness of Palestine's rocky hillsides. In Jesus the vividness and plasticity of ancient, Oriental myth was combined with the spiritual element which Otto has emphasized.

Unfortunately, we shall never be able to learn exactly what Jesus' eschatology was, since the views of his earlier followers

⁹*A Theology for the Social Gospel*, New York, 1917, p. 198.

have unconsciously modified their reports of his sayings. But, much as we should like to know, in order to set at rest the endless discussion of the subject, for practical religious reasons it is better that we do not know. For it is not the program, but the ethical attitudes and the spiritual dynamic of Jesus which are religiously valuable. Since we do not know Jesus' views, mistaken idolatry cannot elevate them into laws for his followers. We can put modern social science into our conception of the creation of the new age as we put physical and biological science into the creation of the universe. As Schweitzer says and illustrates in his own life, Jesus is an authority, for our wills even if not for our intellects. What this involves belongs to the discussion of the next chapter. The famous preacher and essayist, the "gloomy dean," William Ralph Inge, once described Schweitzer's *Quest* as "a production which I am old-fashioned enough to think blasphemous."¹⁰ The next year Inge went to Saint Paul's and an eventual K. C. V. O. Schweitzer went to Africa—and sainthood.

¹⁰*TS*, XI (1909-10), p. 586.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH THE SEARCH FOR A SOCIAL JESUS

I. VICISSITUDES OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL THINKING

JUST at the time when the nineteenth-century trend toward social reform seemed to be on the verge of wide successes, when the "social gospel" seemed about to bear fruit in practical and visible social advances, thoroughgoing eschatology suddenly raised its frightful head to proclaim stentoriously that Jesus was anything but a social reformer; he was not even a teacher of ethics. It seemed as if the church, if it were to follow its Master, were doomed, either to wear ascension robes forever and scan the heavens perpetually looking for a Christ who never returned, or else to bury its head in clouds of mystical incense in order to forget the woes and wrongs of a suffering and evil world. Is Schweitzer right in saying that Jesus is not an authority for our intellects?¹ Are Jesus' moral insights into social problems of no validity or value for the twentieth century?

The vicissitudes of interpretation which the social teachings of Jesus have suffered through the centuries make a strange record. In attempting to rescue the practical values of Jesus from annihilation at his own hands, Schweitzer claims that "no

¹*Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p. 636.

learned guardianship is necessary to an understanding of Jesus. . . . His essential nature and what he is and demands impresses itself upon one merely from certain lapidary expressions."² The variety of the interpretations which have been imposed upon Jesus' words belies this optimism. Too many social interpretations have been thoroughly partisan and unscientific from both a biblical and a sociological point of view. Their contradictions are quite unintelligible unless they are considered in relation to the conditions of their origin.

In no field has the interpretation of Jesus suffered more from current fads and fancies, in none has it more directly responded to cultural changes than in the field of social and economic problems. The attitude of the church to the state and society at large was one thing when Jesus was expected immediately to return on the clouds. It was quite another between Domitian and Constantine, still another after Constantine. It was one thing in medieval Europe, quite another in Germany after the Reformation, and still another in France under the Concordat. Victorian England, Bismarck's Germany, and the Russia of Alexander II; contemporary America, France, and Germany—each calls forth a different attitude and interpretation on the part of the church.

It is impossible here to describe the varying responses of Christians to social stimuli, the gradual recovery of a "social Jesus," and the now-threatened loss of the "social gospel." The churches have often been criminally slow to draw the natural inferences from his attitudes and teachings. Yet a good case in extenuation of their tardiness can be made if it be remembered that they are bodies of the fairly well-to-do, supported largely by the rich but nevertheless painfully aware of the evil in the world and of their own social shortcomings. When no one knows the solution for the complex economic and social problems of the modern world, the churches can hardly be

²*Ibid.*, p. 634.

expected to give a clear answer. Jesus was neither economist nor sociologist.

Amid the welter of published interpretations of Jesus' social attitudes and of supposedly Christian panaceas for the world's ills, only a few outstanding examples can be selected for discussion. Thoroughgoing evolution takes the low road and thoroughgoing eschatology the high road, while "in between in the misty flats," innumerable mixtures and syntheses "grope to and fro."

II. NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPIRITUALIZING INTERPRETATIONS

Evolutionary interpretations of the kingdom of heaven coupled with the direct and supposedly undiluted application of Jesus' teachings to modern conditions have ruled the thought of the vast majority of socially minded Christians for the last hundred years. This type of interpretation has committed a multitude of social and exegetical sins, of both omission and commission. It has included a vast amount of good intention, hearty devotion, and unselfish service. Social settlements, social welfare work, and social service in all its phases have been inspired by the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. Obsessed with the idea of evolution, the last century has been able to see nothing else in the parables of Jesus and his initial message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Social service was expected to bring heaven to earth in ordered, evolutionary fashion.

This type of interpretation has been so common that innumerable outstanding representatives of it might easily be found. Perhaps the most notable as well as the most influential are to be seen in Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Harnack, and Wilhelm Herrmann. Until recent years their interpretations of Jesus have governed the greater part of the Christian public which knew anything at all of the results of scientific exegesis.

The Kantian interpretation of the kingdom of God as fa-

voured by Ritschl has had extraordinary influence upon Christian thinking and action during the last fifty years, because Ritschl made so much of the term and because his interpretation agreed so beautifully with the *Zeitgeist*. Ritschl began his little volume, *Instruction in the Christian Religion* (1875), thus:

"The kingdom of God is the divinely vouched-for highest good of the community founded through His revelation in Christ; but it is the highest good only in the sense that it forms at the same time the ethical ideal, for whose attainment the members of the community bind themselves together through their definite reciprocal action."

In other words, Ritschl insisted that the kingdom of God was not a vision of apocalyptic eschatology, but an inner state of mind. It had "its universal law and its personal motive in love to God and to one's neighbour," and "received its impulse from the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ." The Christian, impelled by this power and guided by this law, would carry out, in good Lutheran fashion, the duties of his class and calling in the Christian community.

The developing social consciousness of the nineteenth century revealed itself in Ritschl's preoccupation with the idea of the kingdom of God as the Christian community, a perfect moral fellowship. History was "the education of the human race," its preparation for the progressive realization of this end. Out of the kingdom of sin, a fellowship of evil conduct, a reconciliation worked by God in Christ brought the sinner into the fellowship of the kingdom. Jesus was "not concerned to provide a moral code for all the details of life"; he was "the bearer of the perfect spiritual religion."

Eschatology in the apocalyptic sense meant nothing to Ritschl. Apparently without sensing the problem involved, he dismissed the whole matter with the summary statement that this peculiar belief was no longer held, except in sectarian circles. The church did not expect the earth to be the scene of

Christ's dominion. And Ritschl himself refrained from any attempt at an eschatological theory since the New Testament offered no consistent data.

Ritschl did not exhibit the developing social conscience of nineteenth-century Christianity. He gave no hint of an obligation on the part of the Christian to do something about the evils of society. The Christian achieved "religious dominion over the world . . . through faith in the loving providence of God, through the virtues of humility and patience, and, finally, through prayer." Within the kingdom of God the believer enjoyed "freedom of action in the form of a special moral vocation," which demanded only that he perform the duties of his calling. "Moral action in our calling is . . . the form in which our life-work as a totality is produced as our contribution to the kingdom of God." Our aim, as Christians, was "the realization of the universal good within the special limited domain of our vocation." To quietistic pietism and to commercial competitive aggression no interpretation could have been more satisfactory. Ritschlianism was socially minded, but not too much so. It may be called a comfortable doctrine. "A torturing self-scrutiny," lest we are not doing enough, was specifically deprecated. "Prudence counsels us not to put an excessive strain upon our powers."³ How far the world has come from Ritschl to Barth, with his stark pessimism and ever-impending crisis! How aptly Ritschl illustrates nineteenth-century optimism combined with self-satisfied otherworldliness!

III. THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN GERMANY

Adolf Harnack was not only much more liberal and much more carefully critical than Ritschl, but also much more vigorously social. In the third principle of the message of Jesus, he found a basis for practical social activity, not mere charity; not

³Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* . . ., tr. by H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macauley, 2d ed., Edinburgh, 1902, pp. 667 f.

the "inner mission" only, but the reform of society to conform to the dictates of brotherly love.⁴ He says, indeed, that the words, "My kingdom is not of this world," "not only exclude such a political theocracy as the Pope aims at setting up," but "negatively they forbid all direct and formal interference of religion in worldly affairs." But he continues half a page below, "Let us fight, let us struggle, let us get justice for the oppressed, let us order the circumstances of the world as with a clear conscience we can, and as we think best for our neighbor; but do not let us expect the Gospel to afford us any direct help."⁵ In other words, the Gospel provides no detailed schemes of reform.

The church, as such, then, will not enter politics, but it is the Christian's duty to do so. He will study social and economic conditions in the light of Jesus' ideas and do what he can, not merely to fulfill his calling as a Christian and a citizen, as Ritschl maintained, but to realize in society the higher righteousness under the commandment of love. Harnack's activities, as president of the Evangelical-Social Congress,⁶ in attempting to lessen class conflict and to improve social conditions, as well as his efforts to combat the struggle-for-existence ethics of Neo-Darwinism, to promote peace, and to create a Christian community of nations, prove how earnestly he took his own responsibilities in social matters. His very efforts to separate the kernel from the husk of the Gospel were motivated largely by the desire for the social fruits of Christianity.

Wilhelm Herrmann's purpose was the same. In an address at the Darmstadt Evangelical-Social Congress of 1903, he recognized explicitly the problem of interim ethics which is raised by the eschatological expectations of Jesus. Such a saying as, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," was natural on

⁴*Wesen des Christentums*, pp. 63 ff., E. T., pp. 106-10.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 73 f.; E. T., pp. 124 f.; developed at length in Harnack and Herrmann, *Essays on the Social Gospel*, New York and London, 1907, pp. 66-91.

⁶See below, pp. 264 f.

the lips of Jesus because he thought the world was soon to pass away. But the command to love one's neighbor had no such explanation and no limitation. The process of historical research, he maintained, had freed the Christian from indolent and unthinking obedience to the letter of Jesus' sayings, as if they were laws or commands. The conflict between the Gospel attitude and the modern outlook was obviated by remembering that Jesus was not speaking to men of our day. For him moral discernment, not obedience to rules, was the essence of religion. Therefore, the disquieting anxiety which feels that in not following Jesus in all details a person is unchristian was itself unchristian. The idea of a "complete Christianity," with "counsels of perfection," which is impossible for mortals, or for all but a select few, undermined the very foundations of true Christianity. The Christian would disobey the rules that, on one view, Jesus laid down, not with a secret feeling of guilt, but with a sense of moral independence like that of Jesus himself. We were not thereby "renouncing a complete Christianity," for "complete Christianity is the personal life of discipline and freedom revealed to man in Jesus."⁷

Two German organizations offer excellent examples of efforts to study society scientifically under competent leadership: the "Association for Social Politics" (*Verein für Sozialpolitik*), founded in 1873 under the leadership of economists such as Adolf Wagner and Gustav Schmoller, and the "Evangelical-Social Congress" (*Evangelisch-Sozialer Kongress*), founded in 1890 by Adolf Stöcker, Friedrich Naumann, Ludwig Weber, Adolf Harnack, and Adolf Wagner. Albion W. Small regarded the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* as "the most influential association of academic men that has ever been organized." The same may be said of the Evangelical-Social Congress as respects academic theologians and Christian laymen.

Before the assembly of the Evangelical Church of Prussia in

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 218.

1871, Wagner, leading professor of the political sciences in the University of Berlin, delivered an address in which he directly attacked the *laissez-faire* principles of the classical political economy of the Manchester School and demanded that ethical norms should govern economic affairs. In economic transactions between persons the relation of man to man was the deciding factor, and the state must interfere to throw its weight on the side of justice. At the Eisenach congress for social reform the next year, Schmoller, outstanding representative of the objective, historical school of economists, insisted that "the present social ladder, from which the middle rungs had been knocked out," should be replaced by one "up which every man is at liberty to climb." "The ideal," he said, "which should guide the individual, the state, and society is the inclusion of a progressively enlarging ratio of the people in participation in all the higher goods of civilization." These statements may serve to indicate the spirit in which the two organizations approach the problems of society. Their attitude was one of scientific analysis and Christian goodwill.

Two German scholars, one a philosopher and theologian, the other a sociologist and economist, attacked the problem of Christian social principles, not from the standpoint of the criticism and interpretation of the New Testament text, but from that of historical and social analysis. Max Weber (1864-1920), a nonecclesiastical Protestant, a Neo-Kantian, politically a liberal, was primarily a historian of law and economics. He developed a comprehensive "understanding" sociology, the purpose of which was to penetrate to the hidden underground principles which determine social processes. He was famous for a long series of studies of the relations of the great religions of the world to economic processes and especially for his thesis that Calvinism, because of its puritanical emphasis on self-restraint and duty, was a prime factor in the development of capitalistic industry.

Troeltsch (1865-1923) made an almost unequalled contribution to the social interpretation of Christianity in his great volume, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (1912). He set himself to answer the question, How far has the social element been influential along with the religious in the development of Christianity? His great work demonstrated that, to understand Christianity today, a knowledge of the history of social ethics is fully as necessary as knowledge of the history of theology. One criticism of his work needs to be expressed: Like many European Christians he was so deeply afraid of appearing to bow to Marxianism that he leaned over backward. He hardly gives sufficient recognition to the proletarian element in primitive Christianity and fails to see any social-revolutionary spirit in apocalypticism.

In the generation since the pronouncements of Harnack and Herrmann were made, society has been shaken and the face of the world altered as in few similar periods. Many German scholars, in the New Testament and in the economic field, have attacked the problems involved. Until recently the Evangelical-Social Congress has annually conducted its discussions of subjects of fundamental importance. These problems have often been those set by the wide influence of Marx in Germany or by economic theory, as, for example, in the topic for 1926, "The Possibility of Influencing Economic Processes by Ethical Principles"; or by the capital-labour conflict, for example in 1929, "Employer Ethics and Employee Ethics." Up until 1933, aside from the Barthian defection, the tendency seemed to be toward more radical application of Christian principles to society. Christian socialism, as represented by Paul Tillich, for example, was making no little progress. All that is now at an end in Germany. What the eventual outcome will be no one can say.

IV. THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND AMERICA

It is impossible even to enumerate the names of the multitudes of eminent scholars and earnest students in France, Eng-

land, and America who have seriously tried to discover an adequate social gospel. In these countries as in Germany, the three decades before the war were the heyday of the movement. As to France, the conservative junta at the Vatican has repeatedly killed the promising social movements in Catholicism. Protestantism, weak as it is numerically, has been most active and influential. The Association for Social Study and Action, founded in 1888 by Louis Gouth, T. Fallot, C. de Boyve, and Charles Gide, represents a type of activity and a continuity which English and American Protestantism may well envy. Its chief organ, now edited for many years by M. Elie Gounelle, the *Revue du christianisme social*, is still a year older. It is a vigorous and comprehensive periodical which has no rival in other countries. The French Federation of Social Christianity unites some eight Protestant organizations of different sorts which are alike in desiring to "apply the principles of justice and love proclaimed by Jesus Christ." The "tendencies" represented run all of the way from the Salvation Army to socialism and communism. One small group is not included—the New Testament scholars. The lives of Jesus recently published by Maurice Goguel and Charles Guignebert show little interest in Jesus' social teachings. Between science and practice a great gulf seems to be fixed.

In England ninety years ago there was the Christian socialism of Frederic Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley. Later came the reformist preaching of Hugh Price Hughes and Bishop Westcott, Stewart D. Headlam's Guild of St. Matthew (1877), Scott Holland's Christian Social Union (1889), and the social activities of the later members of the Oxford Movement, with Bishop Charles Gore as the leading representative. Connected with all of these movements was a large measure of propagandist publication, periodicals, pamphlets, and books. According to the views of the individual it was taken for granted that social welfare work, political reform, good housing, the co-operative movement, socialism, or communism was

bringing in the kingdom of God. Few took the time to inquire whether the scientific study of the Gospels would discover in Jesus' life and teachings warrant for the assumption.

In America the social gospel movement began at about the same time under the leadership of such men as Josiah Strong, Richard T. Ely, Washington Gladden, and George D. Herron. There were the same assumptions as in England—that Jesus was the friend of the labouring man, that wages must be raised and living conditions among working people improved, that overcrowding and lack of sanitation were unchristian, that politics must be purified and that Christian people must take a hand in reform.

Three men may be taken as representatives of a great number of conscientious Christians who sought solutions of the problems involved which were both scientific and Christian. The first, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), had his attention focused on social and economic problems by experience as a young preacher in New York City. He will be remembered by many as a marvellously sane and persuasive advocate of Christian socialism. Of his various works, which exhibited Ritschlianism and evolutionary optimism fired by a flaming social conscience, the first, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), sought for biblical foundations for his social convictions in the prophets and Jesus. *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912), showed what had already been accomplished and what changes were still demanded. *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917), attempted to replace the selfish individualism that had governed theology with conceptions better suited to the essential genius of Jesus' teachings and more in consonance with modern sociological thinking.

The second, Henry Churchill King (1858-1934), long professor and president at Oberlin College, made an important contribution to the *Reconstruction of Theology* (to use the title of a book which he published in 1901) in his *Theology and the*

Social Consciousness (1902) and his *Ethics of Jesus* (1910). Neither volume insists upon radical social change. Indeed both reflect the calm and cloistered paths of academic life. They are significant in two ways: On the one hand they are the product of wide reading and study and the use of all possible scholarly materials for a modern interpretation of Jesus' teachings. For example the then current solutions of the Synoptic problem are given full weight in the use of the Gospels. On the other hand, as compared with Rauschenbusch, the books illustrate how deep a chasm differences of personal temper and practical experience can make between equally earnest and sincere Christians. King also was a Ritschlian. He could dismiss the eschatological problem with a couple of deprecatory sentences and a long and fairly complete bibliographical footnote. Religion must be ethical and "the *highest good* of men" is identical with "the kingdom of God, the reign of love in the life of the individual and of society." But President King leaves the reader with the impression that at Oberlin there were no such burning social problems as Washington Gladden saw at Columbus and Rauschenbusch at Rochester.

That President King represented a widespread attitude in the Protestant churches at the beginning of the century is evident from the thoroughly Ritschlian, progressive-evolutionary, optimistic view of the third representative, Shailer Mathews, in his discussion of *The Social Teaching of Jesus* (1897), with the subtitle, "An Essay in Christian Sociology." What happened in the next thirty years is vividly outlined in Mathews' publications which rapidly succeeded this down to his *Jesus on Social Institutions* (1928). His study of *The French Revolution* (1901), prepared him for an appreciation of the revolutionary psychology of Jesus and his contemporaries, as he explicitly says. When he published his *Messianic Hope in the New Testament* in 1905 he was already converted to the eschatological interpretation of Jesus' teachings. However, the

effect of that "conversion" did not come to full expression for nearly a quarter of a century.

Thoroughgoing eschatology made little stir in this country and only gradually came to be recognized as worthy of attention. Mathews' volume was too bulky and too diffuse—it covered the whole of the New Testament, not Jesus only—to reach the public. The "social gospel" tide was running full and strong. It was not until the War, with its recrudescence of millenarianism, turned fresh attention to the problem of eschatology, and postwar disillusionment raised the social problem once more, that the apparently inevitable inferences from the position of Johannes Weiss, Alfred Loisy, and Albert Schweitzer began to be drawn. Then the conclusion seemed unavoidable that Jesus had no social or ethical message for today. If his was only an interim ethics, intended to guide his followers through the terrible woes of the last days into a nonterrestrial, transcendent realm of God, then there were not even any social principles to be derived from his words. Even those who denied that his eschatology was thoroughgoing in Schweitzer's sense found it difficult to prove that any particular saying was not so touched with the hope of the imminent, catastrophic termination of terrestrial existence as to be practically valueless for modern application.

V. ESCHATOLOGY AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

When the World War came down upon modern civilization like a cloud of poison gas, social reform was in the air and social evangelism was in full swing. War propaganda made such dastardly misuse of men's idealism that, with the disillusionment that succeeded the years of tense anxiety, a vast number have been in danger of discarding all social standards and moral aspirations. The War did in actuality what thoroughgoing eschatology and interim ethics were supposed to

have done in theory: it completely undermined the authority of Jesus.

Now the social gospel is said to belong to an age that is past and gone forever. Human society is beyond hope of redemption. There are those—of the Barthian persuasion—who are as strongly opposed to direct or even indirect action as any capitalist, and who seize upon the eschatological utterances of Jesus as a form of words to emphasize the absolute transcendence of God and the call for decision in the midst of an ill-defined crisis which looms large and threatening behind a smoke-screen of meaningless words, but promises no advent of the kingdom after the catastrophe. On the other side there is an insistence, even more radical than formerly, on the necessity for social change, even revolution, if men are to live according to the teachings of Jesus; and earnest search is being made for a basis of interpretation which will restore Jesus' leadership.

When Shailer Mathews' *Jesus on Social Institutions* appeared, the present writer had a book in type which sought to discover what the social and economic animus of the apocalyptic hopes of the Jews and of Jesus actually had been. In *The Genesis of the Social Gospel* (1929), the writer, driven by the desire for clear-cut evidence, went back as far as written records could carry him, through three thousand years of pre-Christian history. He made the interesting discovery that throughout those three thousand years, not only among the Jews, but among the Syrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians as well, there is recurring evidence, clear and explicit, to show that the "social question," the problem of poverty and wealth, of exploitation and oppression, had always been present, and likewise that there had always been a belief that a divine reign of justice would some day reverse conditions and revolutionize society. This faith came to expression above all in the Jewish apocalypses.

If, therefore, Jesus used the ideas and language of these docu-

ments, as practically all scholars now admit, what he said about the reign of God must have meant that he looked upon poverty and oppression as the Old Testament and apocalyptic writers did. Whatever moral insights Jesus had, whatever keenness of spiritual vision, ranges him on the side, not of pride and power, but of lowliness and weakness; not on the side of wealth and luxury but on the side of want and poverty. The kingdom of God meant not merely an internal state of moral goodness and spiritual happiness but a society ruled by the divine will. Jesus' proclamation of the imminence of the kingdom makes the Beatitudes, not a paean in praise of poverty, meekness, and weakness, but an anticipatory shout of victory over the impending overthrow of evil, the redress of injustice, and the banishment of oppression.

The disappearance of the Ritschlian, evolutionary conception of the kingdom of God and the acceptance of an eschatological interpretation does not have all of the disastrous consequences which both proponents and opponents at first suggested. That Schweitzer's view was one-sided and grossly exaggerated has been abundantly demonstrated. In Jesus' day it is most unlikely that any one held the "consistent eschatology" which Schweitzer's unilateral mind conceived. An either-or dialectic makes brilliant literature but poor logic. Jesus certainly did not believe that the world was ruled by the devil and his hosts or that men were wholly sinful. God was still in his heaven and, if all was not right with the world, it soon would be made right. There is no decisive evidence to prove that Jesus expected conditions after the great change to become wholly transcendent, or life to be on a purely nonmaterial plane.

In other words, the rejection of Jesus' moral insights as if his were only an interim ethics is not justified for three excellent reasons: (1) His ideas of the social conditions of his own time were not dominated by a consistent eschatological scheme such as his contemporaries should have held had they been

absolutely logical occidentals—if even occidentals are always logical. (2) He did not take the eschatological views of his own time in the full, pessimistic sense of many of the apocalypses. (3) Even if he were a thoroughgoing apocalypticist, that very fact makes him also a thoroughgoing social revolutionary who would be satisfied only when the just Judge avenged the poor who day and night cried out to him for redress.

The conclusion of the whole matter, then, is that which is reached from other approaches to the problem of interpreting the Gospels. Jesus left no commands which are to be literally obeyed. Not even his words regarding divorce or nonresistance are such. In his words and in his life he gave a magnificent illustration of how a son of God should meet the most difficult conditions. The “scientific” view of the world, the cosmology of his contemporaries, which he shared, was wrong. The social, economic, and political conditions he faced were very different from ours. Therefore the methods by which we may hope for the realization of God’s will on earth will be very different from his. It is not, however, an unhistorical modernization to say that the ideal, nevertheless, remains the same. If any one today wishes to be a son of the Father in whom Jesus believed, he will exhibit the same unwavering faith in righteousness, the same absolute devotion, the same unlimited selflessness, and the same thoroughly revolutionary temper. No Christian can be satisfied with things as they are.

In his emphasis on the revolutionary spirit of Jesus, Shailer Mathews has made a special contribution to interpretation. Jesus had both the “messianic-revolutionary point of view” and a “revolutionary technique.” The absolute character of his moral demands is due to his revolutionary psychology. But he remade the revolutionary mass psychology of those who joined his band of insurgents. He transformed their spirit of insurrection into an intense moral discontent. While he held the profoundest sympathy for the poor and oppressed, he also regarded

the spirit of acquisitiveness as the antithesis of everything good, and he never made the mere satisfaction of material wants, but rather the acquisition of a spirit of good will the *summum bonum*. Without being in any sense a social reformer, he made social-mindedness the basic virtue. That was another revolutionary idea.

Two dominant ideas, then, were combined in Jesus: hatred of evil, in the individual and in society, and the spirit of good will. The church and in modern times many outside of the church have continually harped upon the theme of love. The eschatology of Jesus demands that those who turn to him for support or leadership shall be equally insistent on the revolutionary spirit which demands that society as well as the individual shall embody the spirit of universal good will, and, just as fully the passion for justice and righteousness, for this passion is an essential element in the true spirit of good will.

Charles Clayton Morrison, well known as editor of the *Christian Century* and as a vigorous advocate of social Christianity, demands a socially oriented worship to suit the social gospel and a social theology. His "Rauschenbusch Lectures," published under the title, *The Social Gospel and the Christian Cultus* (1933), make the point that the gospel of Jesus and of the primitive church was a proclamation that Jesus was the messiah under whom a new world order was to be inaugurated and that, therefore, the worship of churches that claim to be Christian should be so reorganized as to embody a social gospel that demands a revolution, peaceful but real, in our present ideals and institutions. A religion of personal salvation, an individualistic mystical gospel, had its values in the days of Paul and John, and it has them today. But it is not the gospel of Jesus. He was preparing men for life under the reign of God on earth.

VI. PRESENT DIVISIONS OF OPINION

In the postwar period, the high tide of Christian interest in social affairs was marked by COPEC, the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship (1924), and the Stockholm Conference on Christian Life and Work (1925). COPEC was devoted to a most careful survey and discussion of the application of Christian principles to all phases of life. But apparently little attention was given to discovering what those principles are by any concrete investigation of Jesus' life and teachings. A Christian socialist has remarked that what before the War had been rejected as impossible social radicalism was suddenly accepted by leaders of the church as if they had always believed it.

During the last decade interest in the social gospel has not seriously abated in spite of those who have a social and economic stake in the present *laissez-faire* capitalistic order, and loudly proclaim the religious advantages of the simple gospel of individual salvation. The depression emphasized the need for serious social thinking. To be sure, the retreat from the Stockholm Conference on Christian Life and Work of 1925 to the Oxford Conference of 1937 is far from reassuring. The division of opinion among those who discussed the *Christian Faith and the Common Life* (1938) in preparation for the Oxford Conference is especially discouraging. The variety of theological, social, and national backgrounds inevitably breeds a variety of opinions on the interpretation as well as the application of Jesus' teachings.

The worst feature of the present confusion is the failure of eminent English and American preachers and professors, whose training should have prepared them for an appreciation of scientific exegesis, to show any recognition of the principles which have been known and proclaimed from the theological housetops for over a century and a half. Conrad Noel's com-

munist *Life of Jesus* (1937) is perhaps the worst offender. Professor John Macmurray's *Creative Society* (1935), is almost as bad. The Master of Balliol College, A. D. Lindsay, in his *Moral Teaching of Jesus* (1937), discusses the words of Jesus as if he had never heard of the Synoptic problem. The brilliant Cleveland pastor, Edwin McNeill Poteat, Jr., discussing the Lord's Prayer as *The Social Manifesto of Jesus* (1937), actually uses the prayer for the forgiveness of sins as if it referred to financial debts.⁸

On the contrary, the widely read volume by Professor John C. Bennett of Pacific School of Religion, *Social Salvation, a Religious Approach to the Problems of Social Change* (Scribners, 1935), is based upon a very different type of interpretation. Professor Bennett is aware of what the best critical scholarship is accomplishing in England and America, and of the distorted forms which Continental theology is taking. He recognizes and deals clearly with the basic problems raised by the difference between Jesus' age and ours, by the interim-ethics theory, and by eschatology. The "tension" between the ideals of individual and social salvation, the compromise required in the realistic application of Jesus' absolute demands to modern conditions, the question of a double standard in individual as against group morality, and the importance of anchoring our Christology in the historical Jesus—all receive adequate treatment.

Only psychological neuroses and social-economic prejudices can explain the sharp differences of opinion which exist between such men as W. R. Inge and John Macmurray. The facts may not be equally well known to both, but they are easily accessible. The principles of interpretation are equally easy to discover. In the perspective of the history of Christian thinking and of Scripture interpretation, it is clear that Jesus' social message to the modern world must be discovered by a

⁸Pp. 135-59; see review in *JR*, XVIII (1938), pp. 349 f.

complete reinterpretation of the Gospel materials. A mathematical formula suggested many years ago by Henry J. Cadbury puts the matter in a nutshell.⁹ Let conditions in Jesus' day be represented by a , his teachings by b , and conditions today by c . Let the desired modern application of Jesus' teachings to modern problems be an unknown x . Careful study can discover a , b , and c . Out of the equation, $a:b=c:x$, the value of the unknown quantity can be found. It is not an equation to be solved dogmatically or by guess. It is not a simple matter to discover the values of a , b , and c , but a task involving a vast amount of historical and social investigation. The mathematical formula is only an analogy. Our solutions can agree with those of Jesus only in principle, not in detail. There is no short cut to certainty. There is no easy path to agreement with Jesus in principle, for that is a matter of the spirit, not the letter, of life and not of law. But even if no Elysium is in sight, the search for the social Jesus need not be abandoned. Progress has been made in the past; further progress is possible in the future.

⁹"The Social Translation of the Gospel," *HTR*, XV (1922), 1-13, esp. p. 5. See also *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*, New York: Macmillan, 1937, pp. 86-119, and H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Attack upon the Social Gospel," *Religion in Life*, 1936, pp. 176-81.

CHAPTER XV

THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE nineteenth century ended with the destruction of its characteristic "liberal" portrait of Jesus. It would appear that after nearly forty years, the twentieth-century has discovered none at all of its own. The light-hearted wanderings of mind to which humanity is eternally subject and the ponderous inertia which delays human progress leave the major problems still unsolved. Indeed a large majority of Christians do not know such problems exist. Even in the most progressive and most literate countries the vast proportion of Christian people have not allowed science to infect their religious ideas. They have one foot in the fifteenth, the other in the twentieth century—a posture not conducive to progress. Worst of all the greater part of the writers who essay to settle the practical problems of civilization and the church still write in blissful ignorance of all principles of Synoptic criticism and historical interpretation. Whether permanent steps in advance have been taken seems at times most uncertain. The evidence is conflicting.

I. CHANGES OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT

Apparently a single decade may register a decided change in public sentiment. When in 1915 Mary Austin prepared her manuscript of *A Small Town Man*, her publishers persuaded her to change the title to *The Man Jesus*, and to omit the last

chapter which presented her own not very novel theosophic conclusions regarding his character. In 1925 the publishers thought the American public sufficiently educated—or hardened—to be able to endure the shock. Different as they are, the two editions of Mrs. Austin's work, Middleton Murry's *Jesus, Man of Genius* (1926), and Robert Keable's posthumous *Great Galilean* (1929) show the deep interest of the literary man—and woman—in the character of Jesus, and they reveal not a little appreciation of the critical problems involved. The latter two even attempt a scientific use of the sources. It is possible to claim at least greater openness of mind in a very large public.

To be sure, the changed attitude of the public may be due, not so much to the progress of theological education, as to lack of critical appreciation. How far the public, even the theologically educated public, fails to have reached definite standards of judgment as to the life of Jesus was proved *ad nauseam* by the frantic chorus of praise which greeted Papini's *Storia di Cristo* (1921; E.T., 1923). Even in its expurgated English form it is marked by such a thoroughly Catholic and medieval point of view, by such unchristian and unhistorical bitterness toward the Jews, and by such strange and irrational interpretations that it seems incredible that reputable liberal journals should have recommended it. Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows, a Discovery of the Real Jesus* (1924), is a case almost in point. One does not question the sincerity of either writer, and each, in spite of his deficiencies, has his contribution to make, but their effusions, far from being true portraits, sadly distort the figure of the historical Jesus.

The treatment which two recent novelists have given the life of Jesus only proves that scholarship and fiction do not mix. Dmitri Merejkowski's two volumes, *Jesus the Unknown* (1934) and *Jesus Manifest* (1935) are a farraginous mess of pretentious scholarship, wide reading, Greek, Aramaic, nu-

merous footnotes, Russian obscurantism, Catholic theology, the Greek mysteries, Aegean archæology, artistic insight, Synoptic criticism, Johannine mysticism, and esoteric humbug. The late Sir Hall Caine's thirteen hundred deadly serious pages on *The Life of Christ* (1938), have nearly all of the Russian's faults but lack his charm as well as his footnotes. Both literary artists bear witness to the inescapable lure of Jesus' life and the difficulty of portraying the vision.

However, progress is apparent, not merely in benevolent indifferentism and in critical tolerance, but also in clear and courageous thinking. How far the world has moved is sufficiently indicated by some of the lives of Jesus which have been published in the last two or three decades. How different is the journalistic and Rotarian Jesus of Bruce Barton's *A Young Man's Jesus* (1914) and *The Man Nobody Knows* from the pietistic and ecclesiastical Christ! Harry Emerson Fosdick's *Manhood of the Master* (1913) compared with Horace Bushnell's *The Character of Jesus* (1860) marks the progress which fifty years made in the thinking of the American church. The older sketch is concerned with demonstrating that Jesus' character "forbids his possible classification with men." The later one was written in the spirit of nineteenth-century liberalism for the purpose of demonstrating that Jesus was a real man and could be taken as a practical ideal by the vigorous college youth of modern America.

The outlook even among conservatives is not entirely hopeless. One need but compare the conservative *Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ* (1923) by the Anglican bishop, Arthur C. Headlam, with R. J. Campbell's *Short Study*, with David Smith's *In the Days of His Flesh* (1905), and with the works of Geikie, Farrar, and Edersheim, to discover that there has been advance. Even William Sanday's *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, originally published as the article, "Jesus Christ," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* in 1899, is Johannine in out-

line and defends the miracles, whereas Headlam bases his work frankly on the Synoptic criticism of Hawkins, Burkitt, and Stanton, and suspends judgment as to the miracles.

II. EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS

There are other indications too numerous to mention of the change that has come over the theological landscape. The fact that a book like George Holley Gilbert's *Jesus* (1912), which represents a complete about-face from the position of his *Student's Life of Jesus* (1900), and still more that such a work as the anonymous *By an Unknown Disciple* (1910) can enjoy great popularity in many circles indicates how different the view now taken is from that when Farrar, Stalker, and Edersheim were the outstanding lives of Christ, and when Gilbert adopted what seemed to some quite liberal opinions and lost his professorship in a leading theological school. Another step forward, too infrequently imitated, was the use which President Henry Churchill King of Oberlin made of Synoptic criticism in his *Ethics of Jesus* (1912). Even more significant were such works as George Aaron Barton's *Jesus of Nazareth, a Biography* (1922), and the late Edward Increase Bosworth's *The Life and Teaching of Jesus According to the First Three Gospels* (1924). Barton made some use of the fourth Gospel; Bosworth frankly abandoned it. And perhaps this act on the part of a highly respected teacher in an evangelical theological school, as much as any other fact, indicates a definite stage of progress on the part of moderate scholarship.

Equally symptomatic of the growth of a scientific non-partisan, undogmatic spirit is the work of such Jewish scholars as Israel Abrahams, Claude Montefiore, and Joseph Klausner. While Robert Eisler and Salomon Reinach seemed glad to discover a foundation, utterly unstable to be sure, in the Slavonic Josephus for the re-erection of Reimarus' theory that

Jesus was merely a revolutionary agitator, many of their more sober-minded coreligionists have discovered in Jesus one of the last and greatest of their ancient prophets. Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth* (Hebrew, 1922, E.T. by Herbert Dansby, 1925) is distinguished by its accurate picture of contemporary Palestinian society and its judicial appraisal of the extrabiblical allusions to Jesus. This Jewish scholar not only finds abundant evidence for the historicity of Jesus, but also, in the article "Jesus of Nazareth" in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1932), rejects the skepticism of form history and votes for the essential accuracy of the Marcan chronology of Jesus' ministry. His is actually a "liberal," Unitarian Jesus. A more popular American Jewish work is Rabbi Ernest F. Trattner's *As A Jew Sees Jesus* (1931). It reflects even more recent criticism but is equally appreciative of Jesus the Jew.

Three twentieth-century German "lives" may be taken as representative of the prevailing divergence of opinion, those by Wernle, Borchert, and Bultmann. Wernle's *Jesus* (1916) was long regarded as the outstanding German portrait of Jesus. It makes no claim to be a "life" of Jesus. Rather in five comprehensive chapters it shows (1) his debt to his people and especially to the Old Testament but, nevertheless, his uniqueness; it describes (2) his religious outlook, (3) his ethical message, (4) his conception of the kingdom as future, eschatological, and transcendent but also present and spiritual, and (5) his conception of his messiahship as a call to reveal God to mankind. Wernle will not modernize Jesus, but rather understand him out of his environment, without reducing him to its level. The tremendous moral earnestness of Jesus centers around his call to repentance and to the endurance of hardship as a preparation and condition for membership in the present, yet coming, kingdom.

Of an absolutely different kind is a book produced just after the War by a German pastor and popular writer of books of

edification, Otto Borchert. In German it was called *The Basic Gold in the Life-Picture of Jesus* (*Der Goldgrund des Lebensbildes Jesu*, 1920), in English *The Original Jesus* (1933). How little impression a century and a half of critical study by successive armies of German scholars has made upon the rank and file of German Christians is proved by the immense popularity of this thoroughly reactionary, utterly unscholarly book, which, when the English translation was published, was said to have already sold 40,000 copies, and to have been translated into Dutch, Danish, and Swedish. Borchert knows absolutely nothing of twentieth-century scholarship or of historical and literary criticism. He has heard of Wellhausen and Harnack. But he seeks to discredit the idea of a historical Jesus, by attacking not the Weisses and Holtzmanns, Weinel, Wernle, Wrede, and Schweitzer, but Schleiermacher, Godet, and minor writers, all of whom died before 1901. He shows no knowledge of the social and historical background of Jesus' life, no comprehension of the problem of eschatology, no sense of the impact of modern science and philosophy, no appreciation of ancient or modern problems of economic and social justice. The book is an example of well-written, thoroughgoing obscurantism. Nietzsche and the Nazis might well use it as Exhibit A in a prosecution of Christianity.

At the antipodes from both Wernle and Borchert is the Jesus of dialectical theology, especially as portrayed by Bultmann. The Marburg professor's form criticism seemed to leave no material for a portrait of Jesus, but his *Jesus* (1926, E.T., 1934) in the series "The Immortals" entirely belied that fear. Yet the portrait is rather that drawn by the disciples' faith than really that of the historical Jesus. As to Jesus' life, according to Bultmann, almost nothing can be known except that his ministry in the beginning was linked to a similar messianic movement of John the Baptist and that he died as an insurrectionist on the cross. Eighty per cent of Bultmann's attention is devoted

to Jesus' message. It is a purely eschatological message centered around a genuinely future kingdom which will come by an act of God at the end of time and history and therefore belongs to neither. The chief point of Bultmann's emphasis is that Jesus demands such complete obedience to God as to transcend all legalism and set man in all his puny nakedness at the point of decision before the will of God. The book is a remarkable synthesis of radical criticism and Barthian dogmatism.

III. NO CONSENSUS OF SCIENTIFIC OPINION

When one turns to scientific treatments in the last two decades, evidence of progress toward settled conclusions is less heartening. Albert Schweitzer never wrote his eschatological life of Jesus. The first to do so was Rollin Lynde Hartt, an American who, in *The Man Himself* (1923), rushed in where others feared to tread. The book is a strange mixture of scholarship and wisecracks. Jesus was killed, not by the Jews or the Romans, but by books. Because he interpreted the prophetic scrolls as predicting that the messiah, confused with the Suffering Servant, should die, he sought and found martyrdom.

A very different piece of work, also intended to embody Schweitzer's thoroughgoing eschatology, was Joseph Warschauer's *The Historical Life of Jesus* (1927). It follows the suggestions of Schweitzer's *Mystery of the Kingdom* and *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* as faithfully as any person but their author could. Brought face to face with the detailed criticism of the Gospel records, the theory of thoroughgoing eschatology proves to be bound to exactly the same critical methods as Oskar Holtzmann's *Life of Jesus* and all the other liberal lives. Granted, it eliminates less of the records; it is more consonant with the Jewish background; but, nevertheless, it does eliminate, rearrange, and interpret with no small amount of freedom. The chief objection to the theory

is that, as Hartt had acknowledged, it made Jesus fulfill with pedantic accuracy Old Testament prophecies in order to bring about his own death because he is supposed to believe that only by the death of the messiah-Son of man could the reign of God be brought about.

By all odds the best picture of the Jesus of thoroughgoing eschatology is that of Francis Crawford Burkitt in his *Jesus Christ: an Historical Outline* (1932). Burkitt had been one of the first in England to welcome Schweitzer's theory and to assist in spreading it. His brief sketch of Jesus' ministry is based upon it. He insists that we should not expect in the seed the beauty that we look for in the flower. We should not expect too much of Jesus. Burkitt adopts the idea of interim ethics and all the other details of thoroughgoing eschatology except that Jesus made his journey to Jerusalem to commit suicide. Rather it was a "forlorn hope."

Shirley Jackson Case's *Jesus, a New Biography* (1927), is distinguished for various reasons. In spite of its title it proves that no biography of Jesus is possible. It combines Wrede and Schweitzer by maintaining that Jesus preached a thoroughgoing, apocalyptic, transcendent eschatology, yet did not believe himself to be the messiah, but only the forerunner. It insists that, theoretically at least, all of the canonical and apocryphal Gospels are documents of missionary or sectarian propaganda, and that all must be investigated according to the principles of criticism by social environment. Thus, theoretically, though not actually, John is restored to the same level as the Synoptics—and the *Gospel of the Infancy* or the *Protevangelium of James*, and the Synoptics are lowered to that level.

So far as John is concerned, that is actually what has happened with two of the most scholarly and exhaustive of the recent treatments of the subject. In his *Vie de Jésus* (1932, E.T., 1933), Professor Maurice Goguel believes himself able

to recover an authentic and reliable strand of tradition from the fourth Gospel, especially for Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem. In his *Historic Jesus* (1931), Professor James Mackinnon seriously disturbs the progress of his thought and distorts his portrait of Jesus by conscientiously spending weary pages on futile attempts to extract historical gold from the theological ore of the Ephesian Gospel.

The other recent life of Jesus which is thoroughly critical in its spirit and method, the *Jesus* of Professor Charles Guignebert (1933, E.T., 1935), acknowledges the theoretical right of the fourth Gospel to a place beside the other three, but denies that a careful and critical investigation can discover trustworthy materials in it, and therefore he wastes only a short paragraph on it. Equally or even more skeptical as to details are the conclusions of Alfred Loisy as set forth in numerous publications within the last ten years. None of these scientific accounts of Jesus suspects him of any unusual social radicalism.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Gospel criticism had destroyed both the orthodox and the liberal Jesus. It had discovered none for itself. More than a third of the century has gone and the situation is worse rather than better. The same confusion and anarchy which reign in economic, political, and international affairs dominates this sphere also. Uncertainty as to dependable data from the sources is matched by uncertainty as to the description of Jesus' attitudes and their reinterpretation for today. The two crucial problems of interpretation already discussed, that of eschatology and the "social gospel," remain still unsettled in the minds of many. Yet this skepticism as to the results of criticism need not discourage the student.

As to the trustworthy materials in the synoptic Gospels, the more skeptical critics, such as Loisy and Guignebert in France and the form historians in Germany, are inclined to discover relatively little that can outline the ministry of Jesus. Light-

foot would agree with Loisy as to the uncertainties of our knowledge of Jesus. His earthly form is hidden from us; we hear only the whisper of his voice. Some, such as Bultmann, Dibelius, and, at times, C. H. Dodd, seem inclined to fall back upon the apostolic preaching about Jesus as the limit of our possible approach to him.

On the other hand, thoroughly critical scholars, such as Maurice Goguel, in his *Life of Jesus*, B. S. Easton, in his *Gospel Before the Gospels* (1928), E. F. Scott, in his *Validity of the Gospel Record* (1938), Vincent Taylor, in his *Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (1933), and Dodd, in his *Parables of the Kingdom* (1936) and *History and the Gospel* (1938), find a solid substratum of fact with regard both to the deeds and to the teachings of Jesus. That sharp differences of opinion exist cannot be denied. Yet they are not so great as they superficially appear to be. They are often the result of differences of emphasis. They are sometimes due to differences of historical conscientiousness, differences as to the nature of the historian's task. On the larger issues there is a remarkable amount of agreement among members of considerable groups. Disagreements are due to differences on matters scientific and philosophical.

The problems which the student now faces are not the same as those of forty years ago. Only those who are unaware of the history of the discussion are still troubled by the old problems, and even to such students the problems appear in new guises. The new critical techniques and the new philosophical points of view which now prevail provide new means for solving the problems in their new forms. Progress is possible only because of dissatisfaction and disagreement. The question which is now uppermost is that of Jesus' relation to history. Upon it depend the solution of all the problems of interpretation.

CHAPTER XVI

JESUS AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

I. THE BASIC DIFFICULTY—A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

THE "search for the real Jesus" began amid the reactionary confusions of the post-Napoleonic period. This account of it ends in the midst of the very similar, but much more seriously reactionary confusions of another postwar period that has suddenly dropped over the precipice into war once more. With unconscious but deadly cunning Strauss's youthful work caricatured the weaknesses of the various competing christologies and philosophies of history which then attempted to interpret the figure of Jesus and to find a place for him in history. Because of Strauss's mistaken Hegelian philosophy of history he failed at both criticism and reconstruction, and, because of his failure at reconstruction, he failed to make a positive contribution toward the prosecution of the search.

Recent years have produced no individual Strauss, either destructive or constructive. A collective Strauss has done the work of destruction. But the progress which historical studies and the criticism of the Gospel records have made in a hundred years should have produced far more positive and generally accepted results. One of the chief reasons for the failure, as disclosed by this survey, so it appears to me, is not that historical methods of criticizing and evaluating documents are at fault, or that the Gospels, as source materials, have not been

critically treated; the fundamental difficulty is philosophical, just as it was a hundred years ago. Partly because of ecclesiastical dogmas, partly because of the pride of "science," partly because of philosophical theories, partly because of intrinsic difficulties, there is no accepted philosophy of history. Indeed, until recently, historians of all kinds, with a few exceptions, have been working at their documents without any adequate integrating conception of history about which to gather their results, but with a comforting and deceptive pride in their "presuppositionless," scientific methods. All that they had was an indefinite, blind but optimistic trust in progress. What philosophies of history were available have been idealistic, derived from antiquated Hegelianism. Students of the life of Jesus, being usually theologians, have treated him as a theological, not a historical problem. Consequently the place of Jesus in history has not been adequately discussed. Schweitzer showed how the problem of Jesus' death had been theologically, but not historically considered.¹ So also the problem of his life, of Jesus as a historical character, not his influence or the influence of Christianity in history, not the work of the "exalted Christ," but the philosophical question of Jesus' relation to the stream of human experience, has been neglected.

The popular, "orthodox" conception of history and of Jesus' place in it has been well phrased by Walter Lippmann as a belief that "there is a drama in progress of which the principal event was enacted in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago." He had every right to add that "the modern emancipated man" wonders how he ever believed that such an insignificant event had any considerable part in the tremendous drama that is playing on the stage of "this universe of stars and atoms and multitudinous life."²

Why should "modern emancipated man" not be skeptical?

¹*Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, pp. 21 ff., 432-39.

²*A Preface to Morals*, New York: Macmillan, 1929, p. 8.

The drama and the stage have both been enlarged into the immeasurable. Obviously the "chief event," as conceived in prescientific ages, is no longer commensurate. "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" cannot serve the religious needs of modern man. Lippmann was right when he followed the late Fundamentalist, J. Gresham Machen, in insisting that Christianity demands a historical Jesus. He was wrong in implying that the traditional, Fundamentalist construction of the drama and conception of its principal character were the only possibilities.

The old "drama" actually was christology, and the new cannot avoid being that also. To make Jesus partly or wholly suprahistorical and to make him historical are equally christological formulations. As Paul Tillich has said, "History and Christology belong together as question and answer."³ Here no attempt at a complete survey of recent attempts to determine Jesus' place in history is possible. However, it ought to be allowed that only historical evaluations of the historical Jesus need be considered. Neither theological Christs nor pietistic "Jesus-stereotypes" have any claim to attention. The old orthodox Christologies universally failed to do justice to Jesus as a historical character. He was actually supernatural and therefore suprahistorical, the transcendent God intervening in temporal affairs for a brief time in order to accomplish the eternal salvation of the souls of believers, a supernatural result which actually belonged to a transcendent world and was to be consummated there, beyond history. Such a conception, often in so many words, abandoned history to Satan and his hosts. The old drama was theological, not historical. It must be rewritten, not as a multitude have done, with the principal scene and the title rôle omitted, but with a new conception of both the historical drama of human life and of the one unique Life, the truly significant Event which occurred in

³*Religiöse Verwirklichung*, Berlin: Furche Verlag, 1930, p. III.

Palestine nineteen hundred years ago. Can historical research discover an adequate new conception? Is the real Jesus, as a century of search has discovered him, to play any part in the drama of history and of the universe as men approaching the middle of the twentieth century now conceive it?

II. INCIDENTAL OBSTACLES

The history of the search during the last one hundred years is not fundamentally discouraging, in spite of the confusions which now prevail. Innumerable minor obstacles have been overcome, and major advances have been made within the century. The negative results of criticism, for example in eliminating the unduly egotistical claims ascribed to Jesus in the fourth Gospel and the one "Johannine" passage in Matthew (11:25 ff.) and Luke (10:21 f.), represent no small gain when it comes to drawing the picture of the historical character. In principle the problems of the miraculous, or predictive prophecy, and of verbal inspiration have been solved. The rights of philological and historical interpretation have been established. Great progress has been made in the satisfactory historical evaluation of the Gospel records. The problem of the historicity of Jesus no longer troubles any but a few dilettantes. Such a book as George Luther Clark's *What Goal Now?* (1938) casts no "new light on the New Testament," but borrows the worst of the mythologues' methods and materials to attempt to prove that Jesus was only the God of a mystery cult. It has well been called "merely an addition to freak literature." (Professors of law are not *ipso facto* qualified to be judges in the field of the history of religions.) The sentimental Jesus of Renan, the "liberal" Jesus of evolutionary optimism, the Jesus of thoroughgoing eschatology, all have appeared, and disappeared to the great advantage of the search with which we are concerned.

There remain certain minor historical difficulties, and new

ones will doubtless be discovered to plague the students of the future. It may be that finality has not been reached in the solution of the Synoptic problem, that there was no single Second Source, that the character of the fourth Gospel is still misunderstood, that Mark has still to be broken up into its sources, that the framework of the story is not dependable, that some of the traditionary "forms" prove the accounts they contain to be of doubtful veracity. Yet there is enough of the story remaining to picture a person whose personal character and fundamental ideas are clearly established. Much as modern curiosity would like to know about Jesus, it is well to remember that the earliest Christians were concerned only with a gospel, a "good tidings." Moderns would do well to follow their example. However interesting, the details are no longer of prime importance to those who do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the New Testament.

Indeed it is much better that we do not have a photographic cinema of Jesus' life. Too much would appear that would inevitably disappoint and alienate "weak" believers, just as some persons lose their faith when they visit Palestine. To use a drastic example, Rabbi Klausner repeats from the Talmud a story which he believes to report an authentic utterance of Jesus concerning the use of Temple funds for the building of an outhouse for prostitutes.⁴ There is nothing in it which bemeans Jesus or which is not perfectly proper according to the standards of ancient Palestine. But even post-Victorians would not find it edifying. Thus more details would only add to the "contemporary" elements in Jesus' life and teaching which have no inherent value for today.

III. UNSATISFACTORY SOLUTIONS

The real problem, the problem of overshadowing importance, is that of Jesus' relation to history and to revelation.

⁴*Jesus of Nazareth*, New York: Macmillan, 1925, pp. 37 f.

This involves not only historical method, but also the philosophy of history. With brutal insistence the question, What is the meaning of history? has been drumming itself into the ears of the twentieth century. The Christian must not only give an answer to that question but also with it he must say what part the historical Jesus played in history. What did the real Jesus, not some theological Christ or pietistic "Jesus-stereotype," accomplish during his brief ministry to have become the founder of the church, the incomparable teacher of the world, the inimitable model, the Master, Lord, and Saviour of millions?

The eschatological and social questions, which involve what he attempted to do, have already been considered. Only the wildest allegorizing can affirm that Jesus' eschatology came true or that he established the kingdom of God. The old christologies of expiatory atonement and substitutionary salvation, which were based purely on the death of Jesus, are no longer regarded as adequate. Jesus' idea of God has affected mankind too deeply for many to believe in a heavenly Shylock thirsting for his meed of blood. The Pauline and the Johannine mysticism appeals to but few and must be restated to be effective. Indeed, its modern devotees, such as Rufus Jones, constantly do restate it. Equally in need of restatement is the Johannine theory of Jesus as the Word of God who reveals the truth. The story of the virgin birth gives aid to few moderns in discovering either the religious or the historical value of Jesus. All of these various theories, even when restated, fail to touch the problem of the historical Jesus, for they are not themselves historical. The rationalistic, romantic, and positivist evolutionary theories, which were historical, are as unsatisfactory to this disillusioned age as the older christologies.

It is not to be expected that the first century, an age which accepted the old Jewish conceptions of God's relations to history as one of occasional miraculous interference in the course

of human events and conceived of revelation as the handing down of truth, ready made, completely formulated, and miraculously implanted in a prophet's mind, can satisfy the demands of twentieth-century thinking. It is no longer required—except by certain back-woods legislators—that modern science reckon with the first chapters of Genesis. Is there any reason why biblical metaphysics and theology should be sacrosanct if biblical cosmology is not? Religion is one thing. Its conceptual formulation and systematization are not on the same plane. The Bible is a book of religion, not of science or psychology or theology or philosophy.

Biblical theories of history then, as of revelation, have no final or binding significance for today. Therefore C. H. Dodd's valuable summary of the development of one of the biblical theories of history,⁵ even so far as it is correct, has its chief value as showing what the historian of today cannot accept. Similarly Ernest Findlay Scott's fine discussion of *The New Testament Idea of Revelation* (1935) cannot provide norms for a modern theory of revelation, especially in its relation to history. But he does show clearly what many overlook, that, according to the New Testament view, Jesus opened the heavens, which Judaism had closed, in order to allow that the truth given once for all might "be given continually in forms which are ever changing," to meet the ever-changing conditions.⁶

Some modern theories present the old supernaturalism in modified guise under the caption of a "suprahistorical" element in Christianity and its history.⁷ To this use of terms various objections may be made. Such a doctrine is only an

⁵*The Kingdom of God and History* ("Oxford Conference Book"), Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1938, pp. 15-38.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 249; see chap. IV on "Jesus as Revealer."

⁷For example, Martin Dibelius, *Geschichtliche und Uebergeschichtliche Religion*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1925; 2d ed. (with the addition of a useful index) as *Evangelium und Welt*, 1929.

unconscious concession to conservatism. It serves to bolster the Christian's sense of religious superiority and to allow him to claim that Christianity is not only better than other religions, but ultimate and absolute truth. But it is only a smoke screen. Christianity's claim to allegiance must be based upon its character, not upon the boasts of its adherents. The theory that Jesus is suprahistorical is of a piece with the Barthian doctrine of an outside God, a doctrine which only carries the suprahistorical idea to its logical conclusion and inner refutation. In any case, a suprahistorical explanation has no connection with the historical Jesus.

A difficulty, fundamental but often overlooked, appears in aggravated form in those accounts in which the transcendent impinges upon the immanent, the supernatural upon the natural, as in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. A "modern emancipated" Christian can eliminate the story of the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus without hesitation or suspicion of doubt, but with a sense of relief. As to the resurrection the situation is different. The scientifically educated student cannot accept the form of the accounts, especially that of the ascension. He cannot believe that "heaven" is a place which happened to be somewhere vertically over Bethany above the Ptolemaic crystalline sphere at the moment when Jesus' disciples last saw him, or that a physical body can be so transformed into immortality and incorruptibility as to endure eternally. Ancient Jewish-Christian cosmology and eschatology are too fantastic for today. But can one discard the faith upon which the church was built?

The answer which a historian would make in any other field would be that he cannot deal with such a tradition as historical fact. History is posited, says one of the leading New Testament scholars of Germany, on

an absolutely rational, immanent view of the world. The contents of religious tradition which bear a transcendent character are

amenable (to history) only as the contents of the consciousness of the bearers of these traditions.⁸

The historian must recognize faith in the living Lord as one of the tremendous forces behind the Christian movement. Farther than that he refuses to go. But even many who are not Fundamentalists object: Is "an absolutely rational, immanent view of the world" borne out by the experiences of life and history?

The answer of dialectical theology is a decided negative. No one better illustrates the determinative influence of a consistent theory of revelation and God's relation to history and to the world than Karl Barth. Perhaps one should not speak of consistency and Barth in the same book. One of the chief objections to his theology is the kaleidoscopic changes through which it has passed and the paradoxical and contradictory utterances which disfigure its presentation. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to say what he believes. There are many individual sentences and ideas in Barth's discussion of revelation and of Jesus' part in it with which any one must agree. Yet hardly a page, certainly not a complete chapter, but is disfigured by the egotistical dogmatism which insists that God is the "wholly Other" and that only Barth's *ex cathedra* definition of the terms within which the subject is to be considered is correct. The socialism in which he once believed, the historical Jesus, any revelation of God in nature or in history, all are absolutely anathema. "World history . . . certainly contains no so-called history of the great deeds of God." One can say, "Revelation becomes history," but not, "History is revelation." It is incorrect and dogmatically dangerous even to speak of the "historical Jesus."⁹ He grants that Jesus was

⁸Georg Bertram, *Das Neue Testament und historische Methode*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1928, p. 11.

⁹*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I, 2, Zollikon: Evangelische Buchhandlung, 1938, pp. 69, 64, 62; *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, London: T. & T. Clark; New York: Scribners, 1936, p. 460 (E. T. of *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I, 1).

"man like us in all the finitude, infirmity, and helplessness that characterizes our human life and results from our utter distance from God." But that means only the revelation of the grace of the "Wholly Other" God amid human sinfulness. God's grace brings a thoroughly individual salvation. Revelation has no connections with "any plan for saving men by the solution of political, economic, or social problems."¹⁰ When Emil Brunner made some place for a revelation of God in nature, Barth spoke a vehement "*Nein*," which ended their theological partnership. Whatever values the crisis theology may have—and one of them is its protest against superficial optimism—it has no solution for the problem here under consideration, for the existence and legitimacy of such a problem are denied.

The idea of progress is now questioned on every hand. Various excellent works which try to show the hand of God in history, or merely single out the various advances which man has made, do not meet the difficulties of those whose individual and social experiences in the last fifty years have shattered all their hopes, nor do they solve the philosophical problems involved. A satisfactory theodicy was never so badly needed as now. Long before the World War of 1914-18, many were returning to the view of Rousseau and Chastellux that civilization is an evil. The German distinction between civilization and culture is one example of this swing of the pendulum. It is widely held that all of the inventions and mechanical advances of today are no proof of progress. Various apostles of the simple life have appeared. Doubts are expressed by those who have studied the idea of progress in all of its ramifications. J. B. Bury, whose *Idea of Progress* (1920) is the standard English discussion, concludes with the foreboding that the doctrine of progress, which broke down the "illusion of final-

¹⁰In *Revelation*, eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin, New York: Macmillan, 1937, pp. 53, 81.

ity," will in turn suffer the fate of the doctrine of Providence which it displaced and make way for some new doctrine corresponding to a new stage of society. The new stage has probably come much sooner than he anticipated.

The flight of Karl Barth and other followers of Kierkegaard from reality is easily explained by the failure of the facile hopes which had been built upon the "liberal" theology and upon the social optimism of the nineteenth century. The gloomy ghosts of Calvin and Kierkegaard will have rendered an inestimable service if they succeed in calling attention to the irrational elements in life and history. Under the same disappointment, others—and they far outnumber the supernaturalists—have abandoned religion. Christians like Albert Schweitzer have given up the hope of rebuilding their *Weltanschauung*, but still attempt to construct amid its ruins a refuge in a Christian *Lebensanschauung*. The mystic who seeks the kingdom of God only within himself, as C. H. Dodd and Edwyn Bevan appear to do,¹¹ is following the same path of escape. Nicolas Berdyaev pours scorn on any theory of progress and discovers the goal of history in an eternity which is beyond history.¹² The individualistic, mystical solution, which finds the kingdom of heaven within the soul, and the eschatological solution, whether it awaits a spectacular Second Coming and an audible last trump or merely looks for eternal reality beyond history, should have been discarded ninety years ago when Charles Kingsley disclosed their true nature as merely opiates. That pragmatic test—to say nothing of the modern recognition of social values—should be enough to condemn such a view as merely a refusal to see the problems as they are. Present disillusionment cannot destroy the facts of social evolution.

¹¹*The Kingdom of God and History*, pp. 38, 71.

¹²*The Meaning of History*, tr. by George Reavey, New York: Scribners, 1936.

IV. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE SOLUTION

Continental theology is obsessed by the threat of imminent catastrophe. Illness is a fact to be considered. But a fever does not necessarily conduce to clearness of thought. The solution of the problem of history must not lose the earth in rosy clouds of optimism, neither must it be stifled in a black fog of pessimism. A meaning must not be denied to history because it has not the meaning we desire. A satisfactory solution must face the problem of the irrational in nature, in history, and in individual experience. Surely nowhere does the irrational appear as it does in the death of Jesus. But the irrational must not be allowed to eclipse the rational. Nature and history go on in spite of dictators and threatening airplanes.

If Jesus is to play a significant part in the thought and life of "modern emancipated man," his figure must be integrated into a new synthesis which takes account of both the values and the disvalues which twentieth-century experience has discovered in the universe and in the life of mankind. As an American review of the Oxford Conference Book on *The Kingdom of God and History* succinctly puts it, the Oxford Conference "failed to come to terms with the American naturalistic-empirical school of theology."¹³ Worse than that, it had not even so much as heard that there is such a school of thought. The book lacks both specific guidance as to the goods for which the kingdom of God stands (which "Copeck" did offer) and an epistemological discussion of the grounds upon which a socially pertinent theory of its meaning in history may be based.

In any synthesis which can serve as a foundation for future thinking, spirit and matter, like mind and body, will surely be seen as parts, or aspects, of one organism. The sharp wall

¹³Dan Williams in *The Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, Nov., 1938, p. 36.

of distinction which, from time immemorial, has been built between man's experience and knowledge of the physical world on the one hand, and, on the other, of the nonphysical world in which he also lives, the world of ideas, emotions, purposes, values, and choices, must be resolutely broken down. The truth must be taken seriously that man learns only by experience, that there is no supernatural voice to speak truths which man may lazily, passively, or mystically receive from without his world, nor is there some special preferment by which even the most talented may, without effort, perceive truth not accessible to others. The God of Jesus, unlike the God of the Hebrews and of Paul, has no favorites. As the labours of the scientist in the laboratory have uncovered the mysteries of nature, so experience—hard and painful, often deadly experience—toil of mind, suffering even unto death, killing labour of heart and brain, these are the only paths to moral and religious truth.

Those who have learned from the experience of the past will not expect to attain final and absolute truth. The accidental truths of history, to paraphrase Lessing, cannot be expected to reveal the nature of the absolute or the mysteries of the future. However earnestly God may strive to reveal himself to man, the results will always be relative to man's comprehension. However God may use history in the education of the human race, multitudes will never learn and the best will never fully understand. The problem of historicism is only another phase of the problem of the inescapable relativity of human knowledge. The religious teachings of Jesus are only relatively and conditionally true, for they were given for a certain time and place and people. They must be translated and interpreted for other times and places and peoples. This has always been recognized in practice, though denied in theory. It is not a serious admission. Practically all of men's decisions have to be based upon the best they know at the time. Until

a better than Jesus appears, he is the ultimate. No one can predict that a better never will appear. Meantime we may worry as little over that contingency as over the possible dreadful outcome of the second law of thermodynamics.

One very simple but often forgotten consideration explains why Jesus maintains his incomparable position. Ernst Troeltsch, who was greatly concerned over the problem of historicism and the finality of Christianity, died before he gave his complete solution. In the lectures which he wrote but did not live to deliver in England, he suggested a pertinent phase of the answer: Christianity, he said, "is not a theory, but a life, not a social order, but a power."¹⁴ Because they are not intellectualistic or philosophical, the basic qualities in Jesus which have always appealed to men can be fitted into the Orient and the Occident, into ancient and modern civilization with equal ease—and difficulty.

"Palestine nineteen hundred years ago" raises serious objection in many minds. How can "modern emancipated man" be expected to learn from an ancient Jew who lived in one of the remote provinces of the Roman Empire? The answer is, first, that men are fundamentally alike in all lands and in all ages that are known to history. The differences are essentially superficial. The second answer is that, in nineteen hundred years, culture has not changed so greatly as moderns like to think, and that Palestine, lying between the east and the west, at the center of the ancient world, was less "provincial" than far-western Rome, or even than unique and learned Athens, for it had a much longer and more varied cultural inheritance.

In the third place, the answer is that the Hebrews represent one of those phenomena which appear again and again in biological and social evolution, different as the two are in many features. A strange and as yet inexplicable combination of

¹⁴*Christian Thought: its History and Application*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1923, p. 20.

circumstances selects certain groups and certain individuals to make them bearers of peculiar values. As a yet undiscovered group of primates developed the human skeleton, as India developed the decimal system and Babylonia the duodecimal, as Greece developed art, science, and philosophy, and Rome business, law, and government, so the Jews developed ethics and a spiritual monotheism. The problem of Jesus' place in history is therefore in part a problem for the sociologist as historian.

It is also in part a problem for the psychologist. The genius, the artist, the prophet possess insight which detects and expresses values which others may not see or, seeing, may not be able to express. The biological, social, and psychical factors which differentiate race from race and individual from individual are only partially explicable. But a part of the explanation is especially applicable to Jesus. The late Archbishop Söderblom of Sweden used the analogy of the genius, the late Canon Streeter that of the sudden flashes of insight which come to those whom long and arduous thought has prepared to receive them.¹⁵ The argument is beautifully supplemented in Canon Streeter's last book in his interpretation of "guidance." (I remember how clearly and persuasively he put it in an afternoon I spent with him less than a year before his fatal accident.) He whose perceptions are undisturbed by selfishness, whose judgment is not warped by sin, whose will is wholly devoted to God and righteousness, arrives in a perfectly sure, but simple and natural way at correct decisions in the crises of life.¹⁶ That Jesus exhibited this unbiased mind at its highest, that he has shown himself the supreme religious genius, few would attempt to dispute. He who exhibited unequalled purity of life, singleness of purpose, and devotion to God's will unto the last supreme sacrifice must inevitably have received the unique

¹⁵Söderblom, *The Nature of Revelation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 147-67; Streeter, *Reality*, New York: Macmillan, 1926, pp. 319-37.

¹⁶*The God Who Speaks*, London: Macmillan, 1936, pp. 20-24, 149-78, 182-88.

divine illumination which made him, in the language of Karl Heim, "God's silent action" and "God's speech."

One feature of Jesus' teachings which is frequently used to depreciate his unique importance serves rather to establish his value. The mathematician's flash of insight must be substantiated by labourious calculations. The scientist's brilliant guess must be proved by long and wearisome experiments. Moral truth must be tested in the laboratory of life. It is said that Jesus borrowed practically every item of his teachings from prophets and teachers who were before him. To the claim that he had received them by special revelation from on high, that is a legitimate and unanswerable argument. But, if it be understood that all truth that applies to morals and religion must be a social product, forged in the hot fires of history, then the fact that Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, the Hebrew prophets, and the moral teachers of Egypt, Babylonia, and Greece had already more or less fully proclaimed the truths that Jesus taught only serves to confirm their trustworthiness. He brought the essentials of religion and morality together in the simplest, most direct, and most appealing manner of any, and he embodied them in his life as no other has done. A view which makes Jesus truly historical escapes all religious solipsism. Jesus and his religion are anchored firmly in the past history of his time and place.

As truly historical, he must belong also to subsequent history. Every prophet's visions must be submitted to the long and gruelling test of social and historical experience. A great part of the revelation of Jesus has already been sufficiently tested again and again. But the test is far from complete. If what Jesus taught and lived is true, then history may have a meaning. If men believe and follow him, it will have a goal. As Frederick J. Teggart of the University of California has expressed it, there can no longer be faith in the certainty, but only in the possibility of progress. The possibility depends upon

men's intelligent choices.¹⁷ There is no "mysterious unconscious impulse," no *élan vital*, which has placed man on an infallible evolutionary escalator. Likewise Paul Tillich insists that it is useless to try to demonstrate that history must have a meaning, because the element of freedom in the constitution of man makes history incalculable. Arbitrariness is both the demon and the goddess of history. Only faith and decision can give meaning to history. The faith which gives the affirmative decision and thus gives meaning to history is possible only through Christ as "the center of history."¹⁸ To quote from the Hulsean Lectures of Mr. H. G. Wood of Woodbrooke Settlement, history is a "series of significant changes" due "primarily to man's creative decisions." It is "a spiritual adventure, the record of spiritual achievements." In the long record of critical and decisive changes Jesus holds a position which is unique and significant beyond all others.¹⁹

A century after Strauss, having blindly wandered to make a full circle, criticism has come back to conclusions which, superficially considered, seem not to differ greatly from his. The actual extent of the historically trustworthy material in Bultmann's account of Jesus is probably less than in Strauss's. Dibelius has somewhat more. Even Dodd does not include a great deal more. However, the dominant note in criticism today is distinctly positive and constructive. The emphasis is laid, not on what is rejected, but on what is retained.

Theology also has made a full circle—the dogmatists, not the historically minded—and it also has reached again the lonely island where Strauss was left stranded in the shipwreck of his faith. An American reviewer hopes that Dodd's *History and the Gospel* marks the end of the Jesus of history, as opposed to the Christ of faith. Three quarters of a century ago in *Der*

¹⁷*The Theory of History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925, p. 222.

¹⁸*The Kingdom of God and History*, pp. 112 f., 119-24.

¹⁹*Christianity and the Nature of History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934, pp. 20, 31 f.

Christus des Glaubens und der Jesus der Geschichte ("The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History," 1865), Strauss showed how little connection there was between the two. Over thirty years ago, a nonconformist minister, the Reverend R. Roberts of Bradford, England, precipitated the vigorous discussion in *The Hibbert Journal* and its supplementary volume on *Jesus or Christ* (1909). Then the currents flowed in favour of the historical Jesus. Today, Barthians and theological conservatives who know the inescapable results of criticism are taking refuge in a frankly unhistorical Christ of the apostolic faith. They face Strauss's dilemma and decide, like the Dutch radicals, to disguise their want of a real Jesus by proclaiming a theological Christ of one or another of the several types found in the New Testament. It is a comfortable conclusion, for it saves the trouble of finding a new faith to replace antiquated and obsolete dogma.

Yet it is a counsel of despair, and it is surely disingenuous. The Christ of ancient faith has the same value as the Osiris or Mithra or Attis of the mysteries. It has always been the boast of Christianity that it is a historical religion. The gospel seed that bore fruit fell on the solid soil of history. Can wheat suddenly be transformed into orchid or mistletoe? Christianity is rooted in history, in the Old Testament and the New, not hung on the airy nothings of mythological imagination.

Such a flight from reality is as unnecessary as it is useless. Jesus has not been smothered in the statistics of Synoptic studies or under the type labels of form criticism. In spite of all literary and preliterary criticism, in spite of consistent and inconsistent eschatology, there is still enough of the historical Jesus to stir the conscience and challenge the world. The historical Jesus is not swallowed up in biased apostolic propaganda for the Gospel. The Gospels contain, not merely the apostolic faith in an already idealized, mystical Christ, but also a record, meager, but vivid and vital, based upon authentic and largely trust-

worthy tradition, about a Jesus who actually lived in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago. The Gospels are not merely cult ritual, catechism, and *kerygma*. They contain all three, but also unimpeachable reminiscence. Historicism, in the sense of historical uncertainty, is not a menace to religion.

In a proper philosophy of religion, faith is not founded on historical fact but upon a realistic interpretation of all human experience. In this sense also, historicism is not a menace to religion. A philosophy of history and of religion is possible which faces both the rational and the irrational with realism and makes a place for the historical Jesus in the world of modern science and modern cynicism without apology and without subterfuge. Such a philosophy is in the making.²⁰ The world is still young, and, for the brave there are fields of conquest still untouched. If the present generation has not lost its nerve, it will still be able to see in Jesus a leader who challenges it to its best and a Saviour of all who follow him.

V. WHICH DIRECTION NOW?

It is difficult to foresee which direction the search for the real Jesus will take in the years to come. Writing on September 3, when England and France have declared war on Naziism, one cannot but remember through what strange and unexpected vicissitudes the world has passed since August 4, 1914. The whole of the last century teaches that the search for the real Jesus will undoubtedly be deeply affected by contemporary events and currents of thought. The first World War cut across the course of cultural development like a giant guillotine. Who can predict what will be the outcome of the struggle which began on September 1? The gods of war wreak their vengeance on both victor and vanquished.

²⁰See A. Kathryn Rogers, *The Social Gospel and the Idea of Progress* (part of Ph.D. Dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago), Private ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1937, p. 116.

Regarding one point we may rest assured. In 1924, on publishing his *Enigma of Jesus*, Doctor Paul Louis Couchoud confidently proclaimed that by 1940 "Jesus would have passed from the stage of material facts to that of collective mental representations."²¹ History's stream has flowed far enough to make it appear that the French psychiatrist had been somewhat premature in his prediction. In spite of the thunders of the Nazi Thor and the dancing of the French Pierrot, there seems to be no likelihood that the historical Jesus will be buried and forgotten for many a generation. In spite of such gloomy—or hopeful—prophecies often repeated, a century of search has neither discarded nor discredited the real Jesus.

The last century teaches another and less happy lesson. The world will not soon come to see the real Jesus. Reaction, obscurantism, obtuseness, not to mention the gigantic Satanic forces which reside within humanity, will operate, in the future as in the past, to deflect and repulse the search for the truth and repeatedly to lead multitudes astray after some will-o'-the-wisp of a fancied sure and effortless salvation.

Closely related to this is another unhappy fact which must be set down. There is enough of the demonic in every human enterprise, enough of good mingled with bad, enough of error mixed with truth, to lame every searcher for the best, to hamper every effort, no matter how serious and devoted. In matters such as this, every solution of a problem carries with it seeds of error or of insufficiency. There are always tares in the wheat. Opponents can always point to flaws which they will use to discredit the whole. Progress is always in a zigzag line.

Nevertheless, progress has been and will be made. It will come most rapidly as men learn the laws of the world in which they live. Electric light and power, the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio were impossible so long as men knew only the thun-

²¹*Le Mystère de Jésus*, p. 107; see Loisy, *Histoire et mythe à propos de Jésus-Christ*, p. 7.

derbolt in the hands of Jupiter. Some day there will come a period of advance in social matters, in economic, ethics, and religion, comparable to the progress of the last fifty years in the use of electricity. It will come only as men discard the superstitions and dogmatisms of the past and give themselves without reserve to the study of the facts of history, psychology, and society. No inherited or revived theories of inspiration, no repristination of ancient institutions or liturgies, no ancient or modern soteriologies should be allowed to blind the eyes of the searcher for fact. Empirical religious realism is the path to the truth. A philosophy of history and a *Weltanschauung* which gets nearest to the facts of life will be the basis for the successful prosecution of the search for the real Jesus. It will not serve the world to claim for Christianity exemption from the laws of nature, the processes of a reasonable reason, or the methods of historical research. Progress will come by proving all things and then holding fast that which stands the test.

The facts regarding the historical Jesus can be discovered only by the use of historical method in its widest and best sense. No one element in the historical process, not the study of the ancient environment alone, nor the solution of the Synoptic problem, nor form history alone, can bring real advance. The past should make clear that no two-document or four-document theory, no thoroughgoing or mediating theory of eschatology, no social or soteriological theory should be allowed to engross exclusive attention.

In the past first one and then another approach to the problems of Jesus' life has dominated research. Rationalism, sentimental pietism; Hegelian philosophy, "presuppositionless" science; dogmatism, "liberalism," consistent eschatology; the Synoptic problem, form history; historicism, relativism, absolutism—one after another various tendencies have had their day and, too often, have ceased to be. The problem is becoming more and more complicated, with the resulting temptation to

break loose from the failures and successes of the past, cut all Gordian knots, and seek a simple formula or method which solves all problems out of hand. The past teaches that progress is made only as all the good that has been discovered in the past is used to nourish the future's growth. Supermen become more and more necessary in order to discard the worthless and to compass and use the vast wealth which man's slow progress has stored up. There must be a combination of keen and clear-thinking philosophy, unabashed common sense, unswerving historical method, unselfish good will, and profound spiritual insight. The world has always needed such supermen, and, when it has found them, it has rejoiced and gone forward.

Too much must not be expected. The past teaches that progress is woefully slow, finality unattainable. The picture that historical research can draw of Jesus will never be a photograph. Its details will always be obscure. If God has anything to do with history—as Jesus and Christians generally have believed—it would appear that He did not intend the details to be crystal-clear, lest men sit down to worship the perfect picture instead of following the Leader, who goes on ever into new worlds. Salvation will come to individuals and societies in proportion as they choose the light that is in their world instead of the darkness.

Evolutionary optimism, which expects the processes of nature to save mankind, and soteriological optimism, which expects a divine magic to do it without man's effort, are equally discredited by the records of history. But an apocalyptic pessimism which sees the world wholly in the grasp of evil is likewise unjustified. If the myriads of years of unwritten history and the brief 5000 that have been recorded teach anything, it is that the human race moves slowly onward and upward. If the search for the real Jesus teaches anything, it is that he has in the past and will in the future come ever to be better understood and to mean more in the life of mankind.

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ABBREVIATIONS

HTR	Harvard Theological Review	RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature	TR	Theologische Rundschau
JR	Journal of Religion	TSK	Theologische Studien und Kritiken
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies	ZNW	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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